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Rupees Two



Mizo families returning to the mainstream. Will the mainstream accept them? See Mediawatch, p.2.

Reluctant Rehabilitation for '84 Carnage Victims

No Easy Answers in West Delhi

Jasjit Purewal

The November riots of 1984 have crossed over into the threshold of history for most, but there are a few for whom they remain an unrelenting reality. They are the victims. A holocaust which left 4,000 Sikhs dead and over 60,000 sitting in 25 camps all over Delhi, has left indelible scars. Not only has the honour, the pride and psyche of the victims been violated but much worse are the physical realities that have changed with death and destruction. Businesses, homes, means of livelihood and bread-winners, have all been consumed in this ugly war of hate. One day, they had order and dignity in their lives and the next day they sat shattered amongst its ruins, 'refugees' who had to be 'rehabilitated'.

Two years have passed since, and in the wake of the violence of 26th July it is especially pertinent to look for the November victims. Where are they now and how far have they come?

In November 1984 the camps had mushroomed as basically ad hoc collections of Sikhs, fleeing from their homes, seeking refuge in numbers. Initial relief came from voluntary organizations, gurudwara committees and philanthropic individuals. Finally a reluctant go-

vernment offered Rs. 10,000 compensation for death, Rs. 2,000 for injury, if proved, and Rs. 5,000 and Rs. 1,000 for demolished homes by officials, arbitrarily deciding the extent of damage. Gradually most people returned to pick up the pieces of their lives but for some there was no

going back. These were the widows and the residents mostly from the resettlement colonies of Trilokpuri, Sultanpuri, Mongolpuri and Kalyanpuri where the attacks had been the most vicious and the fear ran too deep. D.D.A. slum tenements were grudgingly allotted by the government after long and drawn-out battling by pressure groups and by public opinion. 990 widows were moved into these Janta Flats in lieu of their properties and the remaining 200 flats were given to some families nearly a year later. Officially, all the camps were closed and the refugees had been 'rehabilitated'. Today 3 camps still exist in Hari Nagar, Farash Bazar and Tilak Vihar. Why?

Hari Nagar

Originally a camp of some 500 people, today some 86 families remain of which there are 19 widows. Most of the families are waiting for some alternate accommodation by the government reluctant to return to their

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Sant Longowal — Man of Peace

Madhu Kishwar

Sant Harchand Singh Longowal was assassinated near Sangrur on August 20, 1985 shortly after he had signed the Punjab Accord with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. His assassination sent waves of shock throughout the country. In the few months since his release from jail and his entry on to the stage of national politics, Sant Longowal impressed all who met him with his deep sincerity, his gentleness and his determination to bring peace and communal harmony to the Punjab. After the signing of the Accord he toured the state pleading for Hindu-Sikh unity, and all over the country people seemed to see him as a symbol of hope that men of goodwill still existed in the political arena.

On the first anniversary of his death we remember the Statesman headline 'Longowal, Man Of Peace Is Dead'. Like Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Sant Longowal died in the cause of peace for his people, the people of India.

A few hours before his death Sant Longowal said these words to Akali lawyer Gurnam Singh Tir —

"I have but one mission — to bring back the unity between Hindus and Sikhs. My method is of love."

MADHU KISHWAR editor of MANUSHI visited the Sant in his village, and was deeply impressed by his humanity and simplicity. She wrote this after his death:



The assassination of Sant Longowal came as a severe setback to all those people in India who are seeking a peaceful settlement in Punjab. But it did not come as a surprise to anyone who observed the difficult, risky path he had chosen. Not very long ago, he was just another name in Akali politics and was hardly known outside Punjab. Even in Punjab, he was known more as a religious leader as the title Sant implies, rather than a political figure. In less than a year, he emerged as a major political leader and assumed importance for the future of the entire country. He entered the political arena reluctantly and hesitatingly. He was a sim-

ple man who did not try to make any grand or dramatic gestures to draw public attention. Yet he has left behind an important political legacy.

The most significant feature of this political legacy lies in the fact that he dared to avow the politics of settlement by fair compromise between the central government and the Sikh community at a time when few people were willing to make such a commitment. He pursued this course in a principled way with rare detachment even

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Insurgency Scenarios

Preminder Singh

One secessionist movement ends; another one begins. Mizo leader Laldenga, yesterday's traitor is today's hero. Mr Subash Ghisingh (no relation to the famous Singhs of the Punjab) the Gorkha leader, yesterday's havildar, is today's favourite anti-nationalist. Laldenga flies triumphantly into Aizawl while Ghisingh goes into hiding in Mirit. Both men are asking for the same thing. Why is one a Chief Minister and the other a terrorist? Do a people have to fight for 20 years to be heard? Will the Gorkhaland drama go on that long?

ACT ONE SCENE ONE

June 86: The sun rises on a deserted street in Darjeeling. Enter Subash Ghisingh, President Gorkha National Liberation Front, (GNLF). Unknown until last month "people used to go for his public meetings just for the sake of fun and entertainment (Amrita Bazar Patrika). Ghisingh says:

"How many times do I have to explain that we want to become Indian citizens. On February 1 1835 the then Sikkim ruler handed over Darjeeling to the East India Company... therefore Gorkhas are Indian citizens by incorporation of territories as they came to India along with their territories."

"To say that the Gorkhas came to India after 1950 as clause 7 of the Indo-Nepal Treaty implies, is a figment of the imagination. We refuse to be treated like second class citizens and immigrants. We also want our language to be incorporated as a recognised language in the eighth schedule. (simplified and rendered into direct speech from articles in *The Telegraph*, (TEL) and *Amrita Bazar Patrika* (ABP)).

BUT NOBODY IS LISTENING.

ACT ONE SCENE TWO

End July 1986: Writers' Building, Calcutta. Usual scene of confusion as people speak on different dates. Mr Priya Ranjan Das Munshi



Darjeeling limping back to normal

Congress leader, West Bengal "Foil this anti-national conspiracy!"

Arrest Ghisingh! He is colluding with foreign reactionaries. If the GNLF resorts to violence they will be taught the correct lesson."

Mr Jyoti Basu (West Bengal Chief Minister): "The Gorkhaland movement is anti-national and divisive. The Centre is misrepresenting the Indo-Nepal Treaty."

Mr S.S. Ray (Governor, Punjab): "Another partition of Bengal is out of the question. Gorkhaland is not possible."

(All quotes from *The Telegraph* 20-July 4 August).

ACT ONE SCENE THREE

July 28 1986: Kalimpong —

"Eight die as police fires on violent GNLF men."

"Copies of Clause 7 were burned in all parts of Darjeeling and adjoining areas amid shouts of 'Jai Gorkhaland!' (TEL).

The play comes to an abrupt end as a result of some audience participation:

"This is a very boring play" they shout.

"We've seen it all before" says someone.

"This is the same play we saw last year" mutters another.

"They've just changed the actors. These are all Sikhs without turbans" they say as they walk off in disgust.

"Ghisingh followed Bhindranwale tactics" says ABP (Aug. 2)

"Like Sant Bhindranwale he too touted the inferior to have a rapport with the

common man... he too used cassette tapes containing his speeches which became instant hits and sold like hot cakes... the simple folk started believing him as their Messiah."

The government is deeply disturbed about the impact of this agitation on the Gorkhas in the army.

And what does the government do?

It is not my problem says the Prime Minister — "The West Bengal Government must shoulder the responsibility of tackling the Gorkhaland agitation" Rajiv Gandhi told the Rajya Sabha (TEL July 24).

It's not mine either says the West Bengal Chief Minister: "Gorkhaland is a national problem" (ABP Aug. 1)

And who caused the problem?

"Congress (I) helping GNLF" ... the Chief Minister of Sikkim and the West Bengal PCC (I) Secretary are backing the GNLF movement for a separate homeland in Darjeeling district, said Mr Subrata Mukerjee (WBPCCI) General Secretary in a report to the State Congress (I) Committee. He submitted the report after a secret visit to Darjeeling last week where he found Congress (I) workers helping the GNLF activists. (TEL May 16).

Could this be our favourite national party? — And why do they do what they do? Remember five years ago the leader of a certain party helped a young religious fanatic to come to power in Punjab. This leader

thought that Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale could be used to destabilize the Akali — Janata coalition of Punjab. The same party now thinks it can use Ghisingh and the Gorkha movement to destabilize the Communist government of West Bengal.

When will they ever learn?

Former Congress minister Sarogi's 'secret mission' to deal directly with Ghisingh shows that the lesson of Punjab has not been learnt. But even if Punjab has been forgotten, they surely cannot have forgotten the lesson of Mizoram?

June 30 1986: The Prime Minister signed a "memorandum of settlement" with Laldenga that gave to the Mizos what they had so bitterly fought for. The Mizo insurgency took place in the sixties and seventies, leaving hundreds of government troops and civilians killed on one hand and not one Mizo home left without its raped or dead.

But the Mizos won "... one better than Jammu and Kashmir" said Kuldeep Nayyar (TEL July 18). "India's 23rd state enjoys a special status ... no Central laws impinging on the customs and traditions of the Mizos ... no outsider can own property ... trade with neighbouring countries permitted ... inner line regulations maintained."

And as MNF insurgents started trekking back home, Laldenga flew into Aizawl to a hero's welcome. Rajiv Gandhi had to face Parliament and justify his accord:

"There was a barrage of criticism in the Rajya Sabha ... the Opposition leaders felt the agreement between the Centre and the MNF would only encourage insurgency ... Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee (BJP) said it was a wrong agreement at the wrong time and by wrong methods ... many members were skeptical of the government's claims that all the MNF would surrender ... only Mr V. Gopalaswamy of the DMK wholeheartedly welcomed the accord." (TEL 22 July).

Ah, well! Parliament isn't everything!

Meanwhile not too far away the temperature continues to rise. While Mr Ghisingh talks of "a fight unto death" ... we will unsheath our khukris and behead all of them" Mr Das Munshi talks glibly of teaching people "the correct lesson" and Mr Jyoti Basu, like all politicians in trouble, talks of anti-nationalism. And let us heed Amrita Bazar Patrika's view (July 31) of Mr Ghisingh's intentions:

"He only wants dialogues with the Centre to clear his misgivings arising out of Clause 7 of the Indo-Nepal Treaty. As he said today, let the Centre show them documents whether they were Indian citizens or subjects of Nepal and from which date the ceded territories where they had been living for ages were incorporated into the Indian Union."

How about history books instead of guns, Mr Gandhi? •

Overcoming Discord and Disharmony

The Thoughts of
J. Krishnamurti



For J. Krishnamurti, sage and philosopher extraordinary, fragmentary living, and an existence bereft of sensitivity are the root causes for perpetuating discord and disharmony in life. He said "... modern education right throughout the world is making the brain dull, because it has stuffed a lot of knowledge, information, specialized career as an engineer, as a doctor, as a chemist or devoting time to research so that the brain becomes conditioned, shabby, by the study you do."

Question: How is the mind to condition itself so that it makes itself a receptacle for *original* experience, alive to *now*?

Krishnamurti: "You know, it is only when there is in oneself, not the emptiness of a shallow mind but the emptiness that comes with the total negation of everything that one has been and should be and will be — it is only in this emptiness that there is creation: it is only in this, emptiness that something new can take place. Fear is the thought of the unknown, so you are really frightened of leaving the known, the attachments, the satisfactions, the pleasurable memories, the continuity and security, which give comfort. Thought is comparing this with what it thinks is emptiness. This imagination of emptiness is fear, so fear is thought. To come back to your question — can the mind negate everything it has known, the total content of its own conscious and unconscious self, which is the very essence of yourself? Can you negate yourself completely? If not, there is no freedom. Freedom is not freedom from something — that is only a reaction: freedom comes in total denial."

Question: But what is the good of having such freedom? You are asking me to die, aren't you?

Krishnamurti: Of course! I wonder how you are using the word "good" when you say what is the good of this freedom? Good in terms of what? The known? Freedom is the absolute good and its action is the beauty of everyday life. In this freedom alone there is living, and without it how can there be love? Everything exists and has its being in this freedom. It is everywhere and nowhere. It has no frontiers. Can you die now to everything you know and not wait for tomorrow to die? This freedom is eternity and ecstasy and love. •

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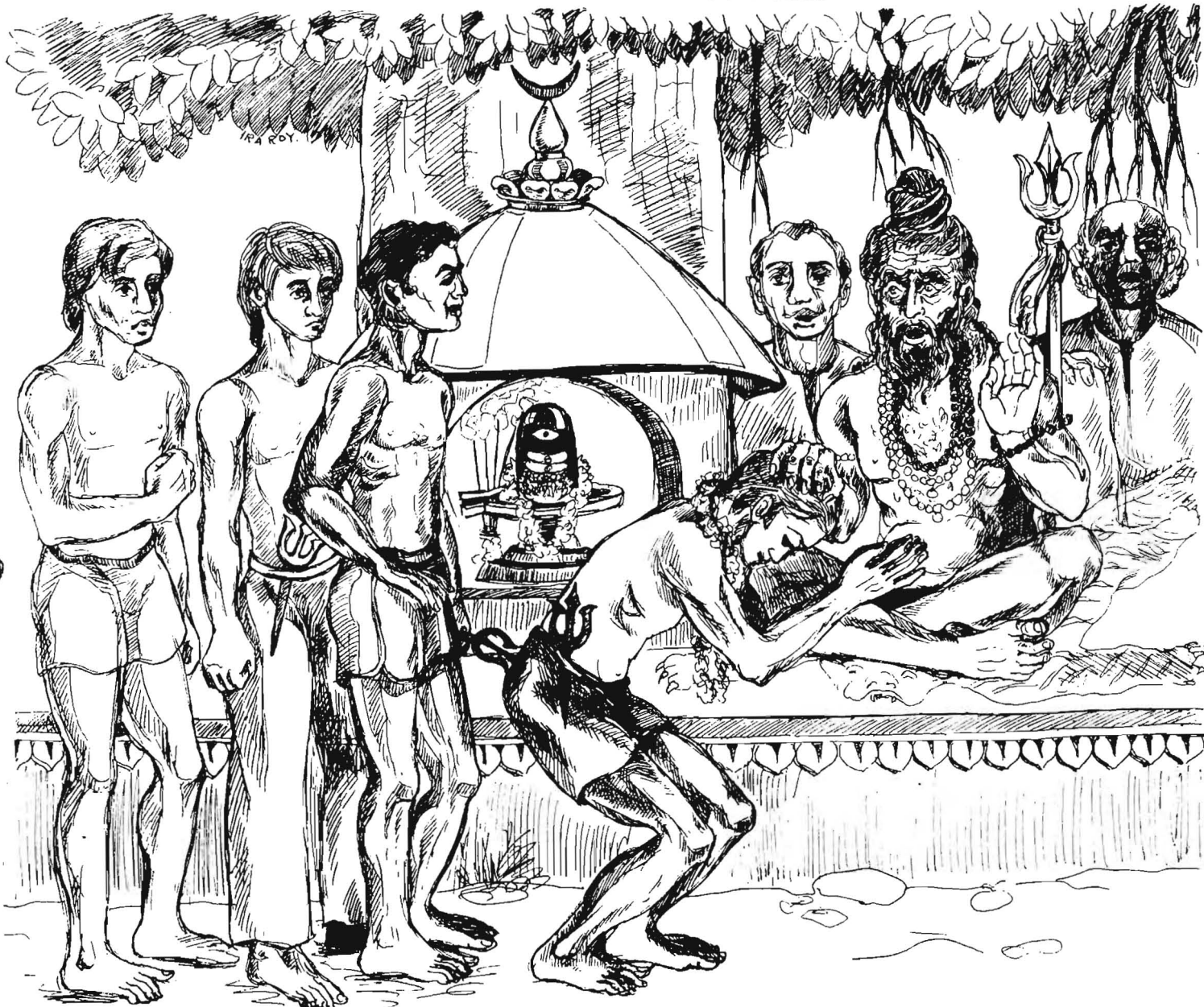
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Trishuls in the Walled City

The Ordeal of a Muslim Family

Inder Mohan



On the night of July 26, 1986 in old Delhi a horrifying experience was in store for Hafiz Mohammed Ismail, his wife Saamshad Begum, his four sons Iqbal, Mukhtar, Mehboob Illahi and Imran, his three daughters Noor Jehan, Saeeda and Miraj Bano and Noor Jehan's two year old son.

For generations this family has lived in a portion of the mosque located on the first floor of a building in Bazar Sita Ram, Old Delhi. According to Mohd. Ismail, the mosque has been with the family for the last 200 years. It is known as Oonchi (high) Masjid and lies at the end of Sita Ram Bazar closer to Hauz Qazi. Bazar Sita Ram is a predominantly Hindu populated area, but a few Muslim families too have been living here through the years. There are also a couple of other mosques in the area.

Unity and Amity

Similarly, there are several other streets, lanes and by-lanes in the entire Jama Masjid area of Old Delhi where Muslims pre-

dominate and where a few Hindu families have been living for long in peaceful coexistence. Until now the local families and all the residents have been a symbol of Hindu-Muslim unity and amity. Even during the worst phases of riots anywhere in the country, or in Delhi itself, they have continued to live together peacefully.

Tragically on 26th July, this heart-warming reality was imperilled. When riots took place in West Delhi on July 26th ostensibly as retaliation against the cold-blooded murder of 15 bus passengers at Muktsar in Punjab, the minority community in Old Delhi was deliberately made the target for attack that night. At about 11.30 p.m. a brawl started, provoked and instigated by a drunken youth, Naresh by name, near Hauz Qazi. Naresh and his companions were carrying Shiv Sena trishuls and lathis. They attacked and grievously injured Mohd. Habeeb, Munir Khan and Mohd. Iqbal. All the three were hospitalized in J.P. Hospital with

serious injuries and had to remain there for several days. During the violence the miscreants attacked and damaged mosques in Ajmeri Gate, Lal Kuan and Bazar Sita Ram. In certain lanes such as Charkhe Walan and around Chawri Bazar, wherever they spotted individual Muslims passing by, the miscreants humiliated them, beat them up, badly and threatened that if they did not migrate to Pakistan they would face drastic consequences. Simultaneously a part of the trishul and lathi bearing mobs advanced towards Bazar Sita Ram, reinforced by more Shiv Sena members from a shop known as 'Ashoka Sweets, Ramesh Chander and Sons.' Some of the mob rushed up the steep stair case of Oonchi Masjid while the rest stood on the road. The shop with the board Ashoka Sweets Ramesh Chander and Sons' is right opposite Oonchi Masjid. According to Hafiz Mohd. Ismail and his family members, the men were brandishing trishuls, daggers and lathis. They told the family in loud and clear terms that this mosque would be converted into a temple and that they should pack up and go to Pakistan. Then they launched the attack. Hafiz Ismail was stabbed in his back with a trishul, a deep wound. The mob's next target was the two year old child of Ismail's eldest daughter, Nur Jahan. Twenty one year old Mukhtar rushed forward to the rescue of the child facing the attack by trishuls and daggers which were

plunged into his body. He saved the child but at the cost of his own life. The other two unmarried daughters, Saeeda and Miraj Bano were manhandled, insulted and strick with lathis. They jumped out of the first floor window falling on the road to save themselves and suffered critical injuries. The other three brothers were more fortunate and managed to reach the road with only minor blows. Shamshad Begum, their bewailing mother begged everyone around to spare her children. No one came forward to help her or any one from the family. A police jeep arrived on the scene after all this had happened. The police took charge of Mukhtar's body, saying that he was still alive and removed him to J.P. Hospital. As the jeep drove away the culprits made their escape under cover of darkness. The shattered Hafiz Ismail and his family including the two year old girl took refuge in the house of a relative Mohd. Ayub who lived in Hauz Qazi. During the night the condition of the two sisters and of Hafiz Ismail, became worse. Their relative Mohd. Ayub took them to J.P. Hospital. By this time Mukhtar had been formally declared dead and his body was sent for post-mortem. On July 27th, late in the evening, it was laid in grave during curfew hours.

Hafiz Ismail and his injured daughters were still in a state of shock, dazed and scared when this correspondent visited them in hospital. They do not know if any of the attackers had been

arrested or not. In the circumstances, nor could they file F.I. Rs.

In the hospital, the family was in for further misery. They did not receive proper treatment as the staff was openly hostile towards them. Certain well known citizens of Jama Masjid then decided to save the family by shifting them to a private nursing home in Darya Ganj.

Scene of Destruction

On 27th July, when this correspondent went to see Oonchi Masjid, it was littered with debris and the doors and walls were badly damaged. The portion where the family lived was a pathetic scene of destruction. Shoes, utensils, broken glass and other house-hold items were scattered around and two ransacked trunks left wide open.

Mukhtar was an earning member of the family, working at a cloth shop. Two of the surviving sons are still quite young while the fourth son Iqbal had just started working and earning a little.

Their immediate problem is where to go once they are released from the hospital. These days, no family can stay with relatives for too long. They cannot possibly go back to Oonchi Masjid under present circumstances. They do not know whom to approach in the administration in this connection. Nor are they aware of the procedures of filing claims for obtaining relief or compensation. In fact, they are quite helpless in face of the many dilemmas now confronting them.

Organised Conspiracy

What has happened to Hafiz Ismail and his family appears to be part of an organised plan or conspiracy hatched by the Shiv Sena, Hindu Manch and other such organisations along with political parties, their mentors in various. With their diabolical aim of establishing 'Hindu Rashtra' they are striking terror in the hearts and minds of all minority communities. On the 26th they conspired to make a two-pronged attack, one in West Delhi against one minority the Sikhs, and another in Old Delhi against another community the Muslims. This is a highly dangerous phenomenon. They are in fact playing the same game as the terrorists in Punjab. Both groups are in desperate pursuit of establishing their own respective theocratic states. Can such a conspiracy be defeated? The answer lies primarily with all those in the majority community who claim to be secular. They must give their total support to the minority communities the over whelming majority of which undoubtedly believes in the integration of the country and has no use for secession. On their part, the minorities will also have to come closer to each other in their hour of trial and tribulation.

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Reluctant Rehabilitation ...

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old colonies where they feel isolated as Sikhs and 'easy targets'. The widows have a peculiar problem, however. Camped in canvas tents in the open they are now the victims of an exploitative administration which is willing to offer assistance but on its own terms. They can have Janta flats, but in lieu of their properties whose excessive value will not be compensated as policy 'principle'. Coming from Palam Vihar, Palam Colony and Mahavir Enclave the widows own properties whose value is substantially greater than the slum tenements. Their juxtaposition is made worse by a market of buyers equally keen on exploiting their vulnerability, but they are adamant about retrieving their money and paying for the D.D.A flats. They have little time to worry about past traumas since the problems of women living without protection, especially with recurring communal violence, cannot be overstated. These hapless women are fighting for the distinction between 'rehabilitation' and 'exploitation'.

Farash Bazar

This camp was one of the most tragic since most of its 2500 inmates were from Trilokpuri and had suffered the most horrific experience of human brutality. Most of the widows and some families have been rehabilitated in Tilak Vihar flats. Yet in Farash Bazar 40 families huddle in one building where there is no official incharge, no free rations and not even a name in a register. Why are they still there? Either they were missed in enumeration or by clerical mistakes, they continue to live a life of uncertainty too scared to return to Trilokpuri where they are still attacked by erstwhile assailants for having filed 'FIR's or affidavits against them. Waiting to be allotted properties in exchange, as far as the administration is concerned, they do not exist...

Tilak Vihar

A shanty town of the victims of Sultanpuri has sprung up alongside the Tilak Vihar D.D.A. housing where most of the widows have been living. These are 503 families, who have left the quarters and moved to what they see, as the security of a Sikh Colony. Ironically, the events of July 28th 1986 have shattered even that illusion. Leaving the comfort of their quarters, why do they choose to live in an open squat where the problems of dirt and disease are being compounded by the monsoon? Saya Jagtar Singh, a butcher, whose shop and house was burnt and looted during the November riots — "We want to live in a Sikh colony now. Goondas who want to loot anyone

today have an excuse to pick on us and the police don't intervene. Even our neighbours threaten us. It is better to live in a jhuggi and be alive than face the fear of death everyday. We cannot go back."

The Harijan Basti which was involved in the recent tension in Tilak Vihar is adjacent to their hutments. When asked about the July 26 incident, Surjan Singh replied simply, "They haven't attacked us yet since their war is basically with the flat dwellers but they are conscious of police support. We are not 'people' today, we are just Sikhs who are always in the wrong. That is why two Sikh boys were killed by the police now, even though they had attacked first. Where can we go?"

The majority of these people are Lubhana Sikhs whose roots are in Rajasthan. They are culturally mixed and have little affinity with Punjab which makes it tragically ironical. In the words of Mani Kaur, "Well, the authorities tell us to go to Punjab if we are so scared, but we don't belong there either. Who will protect us there?" But these industrious and hard-working people want neither pity nor alms. Many have started a row of small casual shops selling necessities in that area and others continue with their family business of charpoy weaving and carpentry. The children, unfortunately having lost a year in school, have no alternatives here and roam, quite oblivious of their loss.

The administration has little sympathy, and this group no lobbying power. Yet they are hopeful and in the words of their representative, Jathadar Ajaib Singh, "We are asking for an exchange of properties, not a gift."

These are the human tragedies of violence, and not merely statistics of an event. Added to their daily frustrations of economic survival, are the new odds of social and political hostility. Now do they begin to assimilate now? Who will 'rehabilitate' them? Those, that have been denied even physical rehabilitation until now, will their pride and peace ever be restored? Can they expect sympathy from a society who's attitude is that; "the Sikhs deserved it", relief from an administration that asks "What more do they want?" or justice from a government whose official position has been that the riots were a non-event and a non-issue? Are Sikh ghettos now their only choice, and will they too not eventually breed hatred with a focus? There are no easy answers, but let us at least begin to question our apathy and callousness, before we reach the point when there are no answers left.

Living in Fear in Mangolpuri and Sultanpuri

Harji Malik

Memories of the November 1984 holocaust still hang heavily over Mongolpuri and Sultanpuri, two of the resettlement colonies where hundreds of Sikhs were innocent victims of savage violence in those dark days. The widows have been resettled elsewhere, many families have left for good, but some have stayed on. Darshan Singh, strong and stocky, cheerful in his blue pagri, a kirpan on a black band slung over his shoulder, showing him to be an 'amritdhari' Sikh, was one of the lucky male survivors. A Labana Sikh, he has reopened his charpai shop and is back in business. But he sees things are very different now.

On Saturday 26 July as news of trouble in Tilak Vihar reached Mongolpuri, Darshan Singh sensed a change of mood in the Hindu residents. "People started

families decided to slip away quietly and 20 to 22 families from X Block left, leaving their homes and shops locked up. They went to different places — Darshan Singh and his family to Shahpura gurudwara, others to Raja Gardens, etc. They came back on the 29th but three families have not returned, and two have gone back to their villages in Alwar.

Fear All the Time

One Sikh after another said "We don't want to stay here. We want to go where there are other Sikh families, to Raja Gardens, Moti Nagar or Tilak Vihar". "Here" they said "There is fear all the time. Our neighbours talk nicely to us; we have very good relations; and then something happens, and the look in their eyes changes — (*ankhen badal jati hain*) and they tell us that



looking strangely at us" he said "And we all felt the growing tension. We were all very nervous." There are few Sikh families in the colony now and in some cases only one family in a street. In the evening, uneasy, the Sikhs got together, exchanging fears and perceptions. There were no police anywhere to be seen and when they went to the thana to voice their fears they were told all police had been sent to Tilak Vihar.

Mistaken Identity

According to Darshan Singh and others, around midnight two men were seen running into the road pursued by a crowd, and were beaten up. There were about 500 people in Darshan Singh's estimate, armed with lathis and rods. A squabble started amongst them and it appears that in a case of mistaken identity, two members of one group making up the crowd itself had been beaten up by others. The Sikhs say that they overheard men in the crowd demonstrating that why were people fighting one another when they should all be fighting others, presumably, Sikhs. In spite of the disturbance no police came to the scene and the Sikhs feared an attack. However, to their immense relief, the crowd gradually dispersed without further incident.

"All night long we could not sleep; our children could not sleep" was the common refrain. The next morning all the Sardar

this time they won't be able to save us. "A three-wheeler driver added "They fight with each other at night and make a noise. And we cower in fear. We can't sleep. We only feel courageous when we see other Sikhs." Young Gobind Singh, another three-wheeler driver, took his family to Raja Gardens but his work and home are here, in Mongolpuri, but "I feel frightened coming here when I am a lone Sikh in a bus" he said. "How can I live here? *Ithe te gulam thi zindagi hai* (here it is a slave's life)."

Tirath Singh's tailoring shop was burned and looted in 1984. Thanks to rehabilitation assistance he has reopened his business. But since the 26 July the shutters are down. "Now people hesitate to give me clothes" he explained "Because they are afraid that if my shop is looted or burned, their clothes will be lost. Even my good friend came on the 26th (July) and took away his trousers for fear." On Monday, the day of the BJP called Bandh, it was quite all day but in the evening, just at the sight of a crowd of people, he started shaking with fear, he said. "We hear the Shiv Sena naras — '*Jo mange ga Khalistan, Use milega Kabristan*'. *Sadi himat hi tut gahi hai* (Our courage is broken). We don't care about Khalistan, we only want to earn our living." Tirath Singh has only one idea in his mind — to sell his shop and settle where there are many Sikh families.



Many survivors are living in shanties; not all have been allotted tenement flats

Most of Sultanpuri's Sikh families moved away after November but on July 26 and 70 to 80 remaining families in C-4 Block did not leave because there were police in the area and they reassured the Sikhs that if they would stay inside they would be safe. "There were no processions, no trouble" said Sikh rickshaw-puller. But a Bhatera Sikh who had reopened his bangle shop after the November killings has moved away. Surjit Singh who sold vegetables is no longer there and others too have wound their affairs and left quietly over the months.

To live in constant fear is no life these Sikhs say. To spend sleepless nights in terror lost any spark ignite the explosive climate in these areas in the capital still haunted by the dead, is what they are going through. What accentuates their massive sense of insecurity is the knowledge that those who perpetrated savagery remain unpunished, unconfined.

Shiva Sena Menace

The Mongolpuri families maintain that up to about two months ago conditions and communal relations were improving, if slowly. But then the Shiv Sena entered the area and started its activities. The Sikhs estimate that there are about 1000 members in the colony. "They hold meetings every night and the tension has grown since they have come" Darshan Singh said. "They were in the crowd on the 26th night and we saw some, but only a few, trishuls."

A young three-wheeler driver puts it graphically: "During the day when we go out to work we are alright". But in the evening when we come back, at General Store — (This is a landmark on the main road into Mongolpuri) — we leave our breath behind, and only our skins come back to Mongolpuri. One dog barks here and 250 dogs bark there" he pointed in the distance "And we are frightened." Darshan Singh adds, echoed by all the others "Why don't Buta Singh and Rachpal Singh come and spend just one night here, without their stengun security guards? Then they would understand how we feel."

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The 'Widow and Orphan Vihar'

Jasjit Purewal

Block B and C of the Tilak Vihar Janta tenements house the most tragic progeny of the November riots, the widows, young and old, sharing a grief, witnesses to the men in their lives being butchered and burnt alive. These women, widowed and poor are a minority, three times over. Of all the victims the widows have had greater focus and sympathy from all concerned. Has that sympathy and concern been translated into their rehabilitation?

Financial Assistance: Initially all the widows were given Rs. 20,000 compensation for the death of their husbands by the administration. Today they still receive Rs. 250 per month as financial assistance by the Delhi Gurudwara Prabandhak committee. For many like Laxmi Kaur who has six children, "this just buys the flour every month." Some private organisations like the Sikh Forum have also organized a Rs. 50 stipend for school going children. But with no alternate sources of income, there are many who prefer to send teenage children to work.

Housing: Too scared and pained to return to homes which stood as mausoleums of their tragedy, the widows refused to go back to their colonies. The administration was pressurised by various organizations to allot flats for them in an area where they could settle together, which would not only make them feel



Setting up shop to start life all over again.

secure but make the work of relief and rehabilitation easier. The D.D.A. Janta tenements were allotted in Tilak Vihar in lieu of their old properties. This exchange was made on an ad hoc basis irrespective of the value of the property. For many like Manjeet Kaur, "I gave up a three bedroom house for this one room, but I was in no state to protest. We had lost so much. I guess a roof over our heads was all that mattered." For most then, even a room to hold the pieces of a shattered life together was enough. Those that had been tenants deposited Rs. 1,000/- with payments spread over a period of time.

Occupational and Psychological Rehabilitation: Most voluntary organizations that had sprung up in the November riots, had been instrumental in lobbying for the widow resettlement, and then took up the initial task of building a home for them. Private individuals joined in, and the basic necessities

of a household were provided.

Income generation was the single most important factor now, if these women were to survive on their own. Various groups like Saheli, Nagrik Ekta Manch, Sikh Womens Association, Sikh Forum and Ankur decided to organize income generating projects. Initially some private businesses came forward to help train and offer job orders in things like 'papad making', knitting and sewing, but eventually, either lost interest or were too exploitative. Since most women had received sewing machines as aid, most of the organizations decided to set up training centres. Today three



The pain and sorrow of Nov. '84.

such centres exist: Saheli, National Alliance of Young Entrepreneurs, and the Nishkam Sikh Welfare Council. Initially a training programme for about 6 months is offered by these to batches of 50 women. The NAUE in Naraina also paid a stipend of Rs. 200/- per month to the original trainees but according to Hari Kaur, "We were not taught anything but were sent back with the money." None of the three centres have managed to use their full capacity however. This according to the instructor at NAYE Tilak Vihar is because, "Many of these women have never touched a sewing machine before and are convinced that they cannot learn." The Lubhana Sikh widows make up 65% of this group. They belong to an under privileged section of the Sikhs and are illiterate with large families. They are the hardest to train because "their lack of exposure has an inbuilt bias to learning".

For those that are trained, income generation is still not a reality. Jaya Srivastava of NEM explains the problems, "It is difficult for them to go to great distances, leaving their children behind. The market forces are just naturally exploitative and a co-operative would be an ideal situation. However, it will be a long time before they are psychologically ready to take on a responsibility of that nature." NSWC has been successful in marketing the products of the workers, through casual stalls in one-day markets with the help of their sons and, the 37 workers there are making a regular income.

Day Care Centres are provided by most of these groups and the Delhi Administration Social Welfare organization also holds 'anganwadis' for children, and adult education classes.

Despite the efforts of motivated individuals and groups,

occupational rehabilitation still continues to be a dream for most of the widows. Whether it is the scale of the task, the heterogeneity of the group, or the inadequacy of the effort, the two years have spent little hope. Perhaps the answer lies in the simple truth of Jassi Kaur's words: "We grew up sheltered and uninformed. How can we suddenly go into a world we don't know, especially since it continues to threaten us. What kind of work force will we make?"

A recent development has been the government's appointment letters to 119 widows for 'piao and mali' jobs. They have been received with mixed reactions. Says Jaya Jaitly of the People's Relief Committee "What about their training that will be wasted on these unskilled jobs? They will never again make an effort to learn a trade." However Lalita Ramdas of NEM sees it differently: "These will at least be permanent jobs, and even though they are not ideal they will at least generate some income."

Even more recent has been the violence on the 26th July in Tilak Vihar. This unfortunately put another perspective on the November riots, which they see now not as a freak accident but a new reality in which they will always be the targets. A new shock, a new despair, and without their men, a new vulnerability. "Who cares about our jobs and our incomes when no one even cares for our lives?" questions Pyari Kaur?

The social workers voice their frustration too, saying that "This one incident has wiped out all our two years work."

Surinder Kaur's query highlights another ironic fact in this depressing scenario. "We may have wanted to live together once but now maybe as a 'widow-colony' we are a natural focus, for those seeking a target for communal violence."

A Tension Ridden Scenario

Even after the curfew has been lifted in Tilak Vihar the undercurrents of tension remain. This is because contrary to the simplistic treatment by the Press there is some background to this tension, which requires both focus and analysis.

Ostensibly, the Harijan Basti adjacent to the D.D.A. tenements joined in with the Shiv Sena

alarming by the fact that there are some disturbing parallels with the November riots. The murders in the resettlement colonies then had been largely blamed on the gujjars of these areas who had apparently tried to settle 'scores' with the owners of properties on 'their' land which the government had not adequately compensated them for. Lumpens had been the force



Shattered lives: they survived, but not yet adequately rehabilitated.

mobs to attack the residents of the flats in an upsurge of 'Hindu reaction'. What followed, was a free for all and a pitched battle between the Harijans and the Sikhs. The police intervened and two Sikhs died in police firing. Curfew was clamped and peace was restored. Or was it?

Minor incidents of tension between the Basti and residents of Block A and B have preceded the 26th July incident. The tension has a root. The Harijans claim that these tenements had been promised to them by D.D.A and were unjustly allotted to the Sikhs because in the words of Bimla Devi, "It is all this widow-business which keeps getting attention. Everyone wants to give everything to them".

The Sikhs in response feel, "These are our homes now. Once before we have been caught unawares by the likes of them. We are ready to fight now." The suspicion continues as does the underlying threat from both that, "We will get them before they get us."

This reality is made more

Two New Victims for Rehabilitation

On Saturday July 26th 1986 the communal violence in Tilak Vihar claimed two more victims — Hargun Singh and Puran Singh killed while standing on the roof top of Block B, caught in police firing. They leave behind two young widows.

Rani Kaur — 22, mother of three children, was living with her husband Puran Singh in the Tilak Vihar shanty squat when hearing the angry mob they panicked and made for the buildings. "We thought they might burn our jhuggis and we would be safer on the roof top!"

Baljeet Kaur — 20, wife of Hargun Singh had come from Bharatpur to visit her mother and grandmother, both of whom had been widowed in Trilokpuri in 1986 and now live in C-79 A. Baljeet had first lost her fiancée in 1984 and now her husband. There are no tears no cries of anguish, just a tired plea, "You want us to speak to whom and for what? This is our life and our pain! Let us live quietly with it!"

Views and Reflections

Pritam Kaur (injured on the 26th) — "The police beat us because we would not go inside. Did they think we would allow them to lock us in and burn us once again?"

Gurdip Kaur — "We are even more visible now as a Sikh Basti. We are neither safe scattered, nor together."

Surinder Kaur — In Punjab if we are killed at least we will die with dignity and not be raped before being killed.

Atri Kaur — We want to work close to our homes. Who will protect our children while we are away?

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MONSOON



Monsoon is not another word for rain. As its original Arabic name 'Mausem' indicates, it is a season. There is a summer monsoon as well as a winter monsoon, but it is only the nimbus southwest winds of summer that make a "mausem" — the season of rains. The winter monsoon is like a quick shower on a cold and frosty morning. It leaves one chilled and shivering. Although it is good for the crops, people pray

doors and windows, banging them forward and backward, smashing their glass panes. Thatched roofs and corrugated iron sheets are borne aloft like bits of paper. Trees are torn up by the roots and fall across power lines. All this happens in a few seconds. Before you can say Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, the gale is gone. The dust hanging in the air settles on books, furniture, and food; it gets in the eyes and ears, throat and nose.

Khushwant Singh

The monsoon is the most memorable experience in the lives of Indians. What the four seasons of the year mean to the European, the one season of the monsoons means to the Indian. The summer monsoon is preceded by desolation; it brings with it the hopes of spring; it has the fullness of summer and the fulfillment of autumn all in one.

for it to end. Fortunately, it does not last very long.

The summer monsoon is quite another affair. From the end of February, the sun starts getting hotter and spring gives way to summer. The earth cracks and deep fissures open their gaping mouths asking for water, but there is no water—only the shimmering haze at noon making mirage lakes of quicksilver. Poor villagers take their thirsty cattle out to drink; both man and beast are struck down with the heat. The rich wear sunglasses and hide behind curtains of khas fiber on which their servants pour water.

Then comes a period of false hope. The temperature drops. The air becomes still. From the southern horizon a black wall begins to advance. Hundreds of kites and crows fly ahead. Can it be...? No, it is a dust storm. In furious sweeps it smacks open

It was **Kipling** who captured the feeling of listlessness that the months' searing heat produces(2):

*No Hope, no change. The clouds
have shut us in,
And through the cloud the
sullen Sun strikes down
Full on the bosom of the tor-
tured town,
Till Night falls heavy as remem-
bered sin
That will not suffer sleep or
thought of ease.
And, hour on hour, the dry eyed
Moon in spite
Glazes through the haze and
mocks with watery light
The torment of the uncomplain-
ing trees*

This happens over again until the people lose all hope. They are disillusioned, dejected, thirsty and sweating. A hot petrified silence prevails. Then comes shrill, strange call of a bird. People look up wearily at the lifeless sky. Yes, there it is with its mate. They are like large black-and-

white bulbuls with perky crests and long tails. They are Pied Crested Cuckoos (Clamator Jacobinus) who have flown all the way from Africa ahead of the monsoon. Isn't there a gentle breeze blowing? And hasn't it a damp smell? And wasn't the

rumble which drowned the bird's anguished cry the sound of thunder? The people hurry to the roofs to see. The same ebony wall is coming up from the east. A flock of herons fly across. There is a flash of lightning that outshines the daylight. The wind fills the black sails of the cloud and they billow out across the sun. A profound shadow falls on the earth. There is another clap of thunder. Big drops of rain fall and dry up in the dust. A fragrant smell rises from the earth. Another flash of lightning and another crack of thunder like the roar of a hungry tiger. It has come. Sheets of water, wave after wave. The people lift their faces to the clouds and let the abundance of waters cover them. Schools and offices close. All work stops. Men, women, and children run madly about the streets, waving their arms and shouting "ho, ho" — hosannas to the miracle of the monsoon.

It is not surprising that much of India's art, music, and literature is concerned with the summer monsoon. Innumerable paintings depict people on rooftops looking eagerly at the dark clouds billowing out from over the horizon with flocks of herons flying in front. Of the many melodies of Indian music, Raga Megha-Malhar is the most popular because it brings to the mind distant echoes of the sound of

thunder and the falling of rain-drops. It brings the odor of the earth and of green vegetation to the nostrils: the cry of the peacock and the call of the koel to the ear. There is also the Raga Desh and Hindole, which invoke scenes of merely-making-of swings in mango groves and the singing and laughter of girls. Most Indian palaces had specially designed balconies from which noblemen could view the monsoon downpour. Here they sat listening to court musicians improvising their own versions of monsoon melodies, sipping wine, and making love to the ladies of their harem. The most common theme in Indian songs is the longing of lovers for each other when the rains are in full swing. There is no joy greater than union during monsoon time; there is no sorrow deeper than separation during the season of the rains.

Some of the best pieces of descriptive verse were composed by India's classical poets writing in Sanskrit. **Amaru** (date uncertain, but earlier than ninth century A.D.) describes the heat of the summer and the arrival of the monsoon (4, page 70, verse 68):

*The summer sun, who robbed
the pleasant nights
And plundered all the water of
the rivers,
And burned the earth, and
scorched the forest-trees,
Is now in hiding; and the
autumn clouds,
Spread thick across the sky to
track him down
Hunt for the criminal with
lightning-flashes.*

Literary conceit and facetiousness have always been practiced by Indian poets. Thus **Sudraka** (probably third-fourth century A.D.) has a girl taunt a cloud (4, page 73, verse 81):

*Thundercloud, I think you are
wicked.
You know I'm going to meet my
own lover,
And yet you first scare me with
your thunder,
And now you're trying to caress
me
With your rain-hands!*

Monsoon is not only trysting time for humans but also for animals and birds, above all India's national bird, the peacock. **Yogesvara** (circa A.D. 800) describes the courtship dance in these beautiful lines (4, page 125, verse 216):

*With tail-fans spread, and undu-
lating wings
With whose vibrating pulse the
air now sings,
Their voices lifted and their
beaks stretched wide,
Trading the rhythmic dance
from side to side,
Eying the raincloud's dark,
majestic hue,
Richer in color than their own
throats' blue,
With necks upraised, to which
their tails advance,
Now in the rains the screaming
peacocks dance.*

Poet Vidyapati (1352-1448) of Mithili from the eastern part of

Continued on page 7 col 1



The monsoon bird or "Kala Papiha".

Monsoon on Chowpatty



T.S. Nagarajan

Freedom Come

Harindranath
Chattopadhyaya

Harindranath in his younger days.

Of cowards crowned drunk monarchs of a day.
They rose and added to the giant momentum
Which ushered in this day of partial triumph.
How shall we celebrate our independence?
Not merely by unlasting hot excitement,
Festoons and flags a-fluttering on the air,
Feeding of guests by hosts who can afford it,
Impassioned merry-making and speech making,
Nay, but a planned and lasting celebration

By vowing that the fields shall burst to harvests
Under redoubled toiling and shall cram
The granaries of the toilers.
The erst-long gaping granaries of the people.

By vowing that the factories shall hum
To clothe the toiling millions,
The erstwhile naked people.
The Day of Independence needs must mark
Release of all those rotting in the dark,
The stench of prisons... all because they rose
To snatch this selfsame Independence from their foes.

Would it not be a thing for mocking laughter
If Indian jails should still withhold
The liberty of heroic men hereafter?
Let a new tale be told
From this day onwards...
Independence swear
That not one stomach shall starve or sense despair,
And not one body go unclothed and bare.
While yet our heroes and our martyrs languish
Behind the rusted bars in voiceless anguish,
While men still go unclothed and starve and die
All talk of independence is a lie!

Do not forget on this momentous day
The peasant and the worker
Whose single-willed endeavour none could stay,
Gathering momentum, wielding sickle and hammer,
Struck blow on staggering blow
At plotting brutes who strove to overthrow
Their stubborn purpose... The sickle and the hammer
Nothing, undaunted, with no boastful clamour
But steady silent decision and precision
Made the glib tongue of the old tyrant stammer
Saw what we see today, the fruit, the gains
Of a fast-growing freedom, and the vision
Of an inevitable falling off of chains.
Do not forget the people
Straining and struggling against puppet rulers
And against power-intoxicated men
In charge of human lives they deem as baubles.
In Hyderabad, Kashmir, in Travancore,
In every nook and corner where
Men rose in wrath and dared the whizzing bullet,
Dared the brute meance of the bayonet,
And women bared their bosoms to the guns

Continued from page 6 col. 5

Bihar used nature to highlight erotic scenes of love making between Krishna and Radha. Of these many are set in the monsoon (7, page 57, verse 18):

How the rain falls
In deadly darkness!
O gentle girl, the rain
Pours on your path
And roaming spirits straddle the wet night.
She is afraid
Of loving for the first time.
O Madhava,
Cover her with sweetness.

All said and done, the season of rains is one of exultation (7, page 26, verse 87):

Clouds with lightning,
Lightning with the clouds
Whisper and roar.
Branches in blossom
Shower in joy
And peacocks loudly chant
For both of you

Another body of literature where many references to monsoons can be found are barahmasa (12 months) composed by poets of northern India. We are not sure when the tradition of composing barahmasa came into vogue but by the sixteenth century it had become well established and most poets tried their hand at describing the changing panorama of nature through the year. The Sikh holy scripture, The Granth Sahib, has two baramahs (Punjabi version of barahmasa) of which the one composed by the founder of the faith, Guru Nanak (1469-1539), in Raga Tukhari (8) has some memorable depictions of the weather. Since the monsoons in the Punjab break sometime after mid-July, Nanak first describes the summer's heat in his verse on Asadh (June-July):

In Asadh the sun scorches

Skies are hot
The earth burns like an oven
Waters give up their vapours
It burns and scorches relentlessly
Thus the land fails not
To fulfil its destiny
The sun's chariot passes the mountain tops;
Long shadows stretch across the land
And the cicada calls from the glades.
The beloved seeks the cool of the evening,
if the comfort she seeks be in falsehood,
There will be sorrow in store for her.
If it be in truth,
Hers will be a life of joy everlasting.
My life and its ending depend on the will of the Lord.
To Him says Nanak, I surrendered my soul.

Asadh is followed by Sawan (July-August) when the monsoons break in northern India.

O my heart, rejoice! It's Sawan
The season of nimbus clouds and rain
My body and soul yearn for my Lord.
But my Lord is gone to foreign lands.
If he return not, I shall die pining for Him.

The lightning strikes terror in my heart.
I stand all alone in my courtyard.
In solitude and in sorrow.

O mother of mine, I stand on the brink of death.
Without the Lord I have neither hunger nor sleep
I cannot suffer the clothes on my body.
Nanak says, she alone is the true wife
Who loses herself in the Lord.

The poetic tradition has continued to the present time.

India's only Nobel Laureate in literature, Rabindra Nath Tagore (1861-1941), has a beautiful piece in his most celebrated work, Gitanjali (9, page 11, verse 18 and page 14, verse 23):

Clouds heap upon clouds and it darkens
Ah, love why lost thou let me wait outside at the door all alone?
In the busy moments of the noontide work I am with the crowd,
But on this dark lonely day it is only for thee I hope
If thou showest me not thy face, if thou leavest me wholly aside, I know not how I am to pass these long rainy hours.
I keep gazing on the far-away gloom of the sky and my heart wanders wailing with the restless wind.

Since attaining independence in 1947, India has taken enormous strides towards freeing herself from dependence on the vagaries of the monsoons. She has raised enormous dams, laid thousands of miles of irrigation canals, and dug innumerable electrically operated tube-wells to supply water to her farms. As a result, even when the monsoon has been poor, the country has been able to produce enough to feed itself. Nevertheless, even today it is not far wrong to say that "for us in India scarcity is only a missed monsoon away." (14).

However, there is no longer the same agony waiting through long summer months of searing heat to catch a glimpse of the first clouds nor the same ecstasy when they spread across the skies and shed their bounty. The monsoon no longer stirs the imagination of the poet or the novelist with the same intensity it used to. It remains the favourite time of the year for lovers but few now write about it.

The Good Terrorist

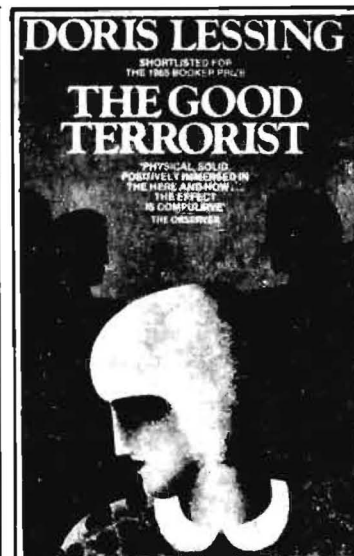
By Doris Lessing

The title of Doris Lessing's new book "The Good Terrorist" is as curious as it is topical. Not enough has been written on terrorism and it continues to be awesome both as a cause and as a manifestation. Few States or societies remain unscathed by its realities today yet Lessing is the first author to have examined it in a context; as a sub-culture.

Strictly the novel is fictionalized around a 'squat' and its inmates who conerge there ostensibly as comrades of the C.C.U. (Communist Centre Union). These men and women, emphatic in their leftist ideologies, are a sample set of the anti-establishment 'groupuscules' in contemporary Britain. But the group has neither structure nor direction. The C.C.U. has provided a focus for wars which are either personal or fashionable. Muriel and Alice, uppercrust and anti-bourgeois, and Jasper, Bert Pat and Jocelin, victims of mediocrity and boredom looking for a common enemy in 'Capitalist', 'Fascist', 'Government' and 'Society'. On the periphery are Robert, Phillip and Jim essentially lumps for whom the 'squat' is a physical need and 'ideology' the password. This awkward group then champions a broad spectrum of causes from Greenpeace IRA, vegetarianism, sexism and socialism.

There is a central character analysis in Alice Mellings who is fundamental as Lessing's comment on human self-deception. 'Sweet', good Alice who's selective consciousness precludes most realities whether intellectual or sexual. Lessing is ruthless and strips Alice bare, to reveal a confused woman-child, seeking reassurance "as a good girl" and trapped in her bourgeoisie sensibility which she overtly attacks but intrinsically reveres. The most poignant example of her self-delusion is the squat where her 'cause' becomes to impose on it her middle-class orderliness. This dreamer is the mascot of the squat and Lessing's 'good terrorist' who epitomizes the individual and social implications of self-deception. Through her Lessing leaves the reader with the powerful conclusive lines... "looking this morning like a nine-year old girl who has had, perhaps, a bad dream, the poor baby sat waiting for it to be time to go out and meet the professionals."

Lessing's contempt is summed up by Dorothy Melling when she confronts her daughter with...



"Oh you, running about playing at revolutions, playing little games, thinking you're important. To the people who really run this world, you are a joke. They watch you at it and think: Good that's keeping them busy." But the satire has an uncompromising reality when this seemingly harmless group of graffiti artists and picketeers explode a bomb in Knightsbridge. Their intent is impact and the cost irrelevant. This is their power.

The style of this novel is somewhat difficult since neither the plot nor the characters are evolutionary. It is a documentation. — sociological and psychological of a group and an event. But Lessing's facility with human paradoxes and her mordant attention to detail makes this her most realistic and factual book. In her writing she has covered a wide-range of issues from colonial oppression in the South Africa of her childhood, to feminism and the nuclear threat and says of her work. "One is a writer because one represents, makes articulate, is continuously and invisibly fed by numbers of people who are inarticulate, to whom one belongs, to whom one is responsible." Here she has addressed herself to a serious aberration in collective life exposing the myths of this new revolutionist morality of expediency and mindless violence for maximum impact. Lessing's charges are serious, her concerns real. Last year the book was shortlisted for the Booker prize but lost unfortunately to Keri Hulme of New Zealand which in no way diminishes the extraordinary power of the book.

Jasjit Purewal

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The Forum Gazette

Minority Rights • Civil Liberties • Equality for Women
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Thirty Nine and Not Going Strong — 15 August 1986.

Our independence is thirty-nine years old. What is the balance sheet of our achievement? Where do we stand to-day? An honest assessment compels us to admit that in the larger perspective we have frittered away tremendous advantages. On August 15, 1947 when Jawaharlal Nehru promised that the nation's endeavour would be "To bring freedom and opportunity to the common man ... and to create social, economic and political institutions which will ensure justice and fullness of life to every man and woman" the euphoria of freedom touched the future with hope. A sense of idealism enthused the youth. The men of the freedom struggle, who became the political leaders of the nation, were men of stature, respected, enjoying unquestioned credibility. The Gandhi cap was to many a symbol of dedication to the service of the people. Khadi had a meaning. Enthusiasm, hope, and faith, a formidable combination, were there to be harnessed, to be channeled for the progress of India and her people. Seeing the Union Jack come down and the Indian tricolour flying high inspired a sense of pride.

There were some sour notes even then. The people of Punjab, immersed in the agony and tears of partition did not celebrate. The Mizos refused to allow the tricolour to be hoisted in what is to-day Mizoram. The Nagas felt no glow of freedom. But the overwhelming euphoria drowned out these notes. The nation was on the march. We had promises to keep.

But how things have changed along the way! To-day with the stalwarts of the freedom struggle dead and gone — the reality of the post-independence challenge had rubbed away some of the sheen from many of them even before death — Parliamentary institutions have gradually been eroded and the new generation of leaders does not take Parliament too seriously. Most of the newer elected representatives of the people are content to have it that way as long as their "kursi" is safe.

The Gandhi cap has lost its moral authority — at one stage it became known as the symbol of "char so bees" — but increased its political power vis a vis the people its wearers are supposed to serve, and at the expense of their interests. We now have a larger affluent class than ever before in our history. But millions remain below the poverty line, sunk even lower than before. We have bonded labour even in the heart of the capital, working for the government, although bonded labour has been officially abolished. We promised justice and yet hundreds rot away in jails all over the country in the world of the "undertrials", and even though newspapers and lawyers together expose their victimization, nothing happens.

We pledged that every citizen would have the right to a full life. But our youth are cynical, disillusioned, frustrated, without hope in the future — of this country. Those who can leave her shores to find fulfillment and opportunity elsewhere because here they see no equality of opportunity in a society where increasingly the too few jobs are allocated on the premises of "who you know" and "how much you can give". Patriotism and idealism are words used only in bad English compositions. Honesty and integrity have been relegated to the dictionary. Khadi has become polyesterized.

In 1947 we talked bravely of "abolishing caste". In 1986 we have state governments and all political parties increasing the number of reservations out of all proportions, blatantly for electoral gains. We have not only not abolished caste, we have added new castes. We

have caste conflicts and massacres, sometimes with police collusion. Usually with implicit police approbation and the approval of the local power elites, with the state government seemingly powerless to stop the savagery and always unwilling to investigate and punish the perpetrators.

We pledged ourselves to being a secular state. Yet the communal riots since 1947 — excluding the trauma of partition make the Hindu-Muslim riots in British times look like trivial incidents. And in those days we had the British to blame. Who do we point the figure at now? Today it is not only Hindu-Muslim riots; we have Hindu-Muslim, Hindu-Sikh, Dalit-Hindu, Harijan-Muslim and who knows what else may lie in the future. And never before in India's long history did the State stand condemned as guilty of murder as happened in Delhi in November 1984 when citizens enquiry groups put the Indian State in the dock. We have come a long way from the promise of the secular state.

In 1947 we were determined to make the Indian Union integral and strong. In the early years there were internal threats to the Union, but wisdom and understanding, and a spirit of rapprochement learned from the companionship of the freedom struggle dictated the Centre's policy vis a vis the states. Greater state autonomy was always an issue but, ultimately, ways to adjust were worked out. But as the Centre assumed greater and greater powers at the expense of the states, eroding the institutions safeguarding states' powers, as the wishes of the Congress party became increasingly translated into the law of the land, the states-Centre confrontation grew and today we have the Assam problem, the Punjab tragedy and the question mark in Jammu and Kashmir, with tensions simmering under the surface elsewhere. Instead of the spirit of rapprochement we have the strident cry of "the Union in danger" to bolster support for an increasingly authoritarian Centre.

We entered our new era of Independence at a time when environmental issues and ecology were increasingly becoming the focus of world attention. We had a unique opportunity to plan within the environmental and ecological framework, to establish our new industries with pollution-free technology, to build our dams in line with ecological requirements, to conserve our considerable forest wealth. We paid lip service to these concepts. But we took no action, with disastrous consequences, which we are now trying desperately to counteract.

Our urban skylines are highrise profiles. We have sent our astronauts into space. We now produce jet aircraft. But millions of Indians still travel on bicycles of a primitive design considered by experts to be unsafe for the average Indian. We have failed to provide safe drinking water for thousands of villages. Since 1947 we have been developing a practical, cheap solar cooker for use by the poorest of our people to save them fuel, and we have not yet succeeded. We have been talking of a smokeless choola for the village housewife for decades, and we are still talking about it on an experimental basis.

Somewhere our priorities have become totally distorted and according to the balance sheet, sadly, where our pledges and promises are concerned, we are very much in the red. When Gandhi pledged "To wipe every tear from every eye" we quoted him, endlessly, with enthusiasm. On the eve of the fortieth year of our independence, will our leaders remember the promises made to the people of India?

Fifteenth August Thoughts

by

Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru

Excerpts from "The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. 6, Navajivan Publishing House; and Jawaharlal Nehru: Letters to Chief Ministers — 1947-64; Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, Teen Murti House, New Delhi.

I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, try the following expedient:

Recall the face of the poorest and the most helpless man whom you may have seen and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he be able to gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to Swaraj or self rule for the hungry and also spiritually starved millions of our countrymen?

Then you will find your doubts and your self melting away.



It is idle to talk of Swaraj so long as we do not protect the weak and the helpless or so long as it is possible for a single Swarajist to injure the feelings of any individual. Swaraj means that not a single Hindu or Muslim shall for a moment arrogantly think that he can crush with impunity meek Hindus or Muslims. Unless this condition is fulfilled we will gain Swaraj only to lose it the next moment.

So long as the Hindus wilfully regard untouchability as part of their religion, so long as the mass of Hindus consider it a sin to touch a section of their brethren, Swaraj is impossible of attainment.

★ ★ ★

... I have felt that during the years still left to me if I can drive home to women's minds the truth that they are free, we will have no birth-control problem in India. If they will only learn to say 'no' to their husbands when they approach them carnally ... all will be well. ... The real problem is that they do not want to resist them ... I want woman to learn the primary right of resistance. She thinks now that she has not got it.

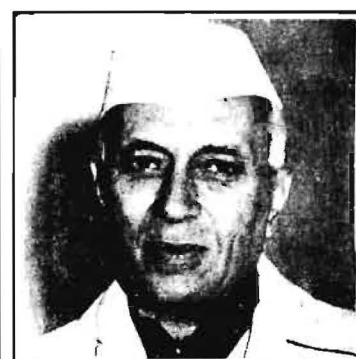
★ ★ ★

A curriculum of religious instruction should include a study of the tenets of faiths other than one's own. For this purpose the students should be trained to cultivate the habit of understanding and appreciating the doctrines of various great religions of the world in a spirit of reverence and broad-minded tolerance. This if properly done would help to give them a spiritual assurance and a better appreciation of their own religion.

The Central Government has, during the last few days, been thinking more and more of this basic problem of poverty — which we had temporarily put in a second place amidst the preoccupations of communal disorder. You may have noticed from the papers that I spoke at length to the Associated Chambers of Commerce in Calcutta; and I stressed that the sole test of our economic policy, by whatever name it is called, is the raising of the level of the common man.

★ ★ ★

Reports from many sources have reached me that the communal atmosphere is again becoming tense, and that particularly the people who belong to the R.S.S. and those who think with them are becoming vocal and demonstrative again. The demonstration part is not very aggressive yet and usually takes some other form. Nevertheless, it seems clear that there is a definite attempt to spread communal bitterness and thereby create a sense of insecurity.



I am rather worried about this tendency all over India to use special measures against people we may not like. Even when temporarily justified, this creates the wrong kind of background, and more and more we depend upon these special measures and the police. In the long run, and even in the short run, this is bad for the country, for the people, and for the Congress, which is held responsible.

★ ★ ★

Ever since the partition and the horrible things that followed, Muslims in India have been very hard hit, psychologically even more so than otherwise. They have not felt sure of their position in this country. It is for us now to take full advantage of this new atmosphere and produce the sense of absolute security in the minds of the Muslims and other minorities. The majority always owes a duty of this kind to minorities. We must not think in terms of copying what Pakistan does or think of retaliation. Both Hindu and Muslim, as well as Sikh or Christian or Parsi, must believe that they are as good citizens of India as anyone else. Therefore, I suggest to you that, while we should exercise vigilance, we should act generously and shed fear.

Remembering Sant Longowal

Harji Malik

Many had called him weak and ambiguous, others a coward who had been unwilling to stand up to the extremists for fear of his life. To-day he is being talked of as akin to Gandhi in the ultimate sacrifice of his life in the cause of communal harmony. His death, like those of Gandhi, of Martin Luther King Jr., was no surprise assassination. All three men deliberately took up the gauntlet of peace in the face of violence and hatred, all knew what was at stake, all stood steadfast to death.

The qualitative difference is that in Longowal's case it is only in death that we have recognised the worth of the man, his deep sense of humanism and compassion, his courage and integrity, his abhorrence of violence, all qualities which, had he received national support earlier, both popular and political, while alive, could have served the country so well, and saved it much tragedy. The man of peace was to be appreciated only after the assassin's bullet, the man of goodwill too late. For with earlier recognition the August Accord could have been signed before June 1984. That is the failure of our present polity.

Twenty-fifth April 1983 I met Sant Longowal for the first time in the Akali Dal office in the Golden Temple complex. I had expected a typical politician, "diktator" of the Akali Morcha, tough, facile in his answers, aggressive, populist in manner. Instead there was the Sant with his serene expression, the gentle smile so quick to come, the mixture of quite dignity and innate authority. The austerity of the room, furnished only with the barest essentials, reflected his style. We were punctual, so was he, dressed in his usual spotless, fresh white kurta and churidar, wearing the bright blue Akali turban, his face thoughtful above what was then a beard with many more black streaks than after his jail experience. Soft spoken—another surprise, he answered our questions briefly, to the point, with patient courtesy. He categorically denied that the Akalis had ever demanded Khalistan, warned that unlike the Assam situation, the Punjab crisis would be uncontrollable if it went out of the hands of the Akali Dal, and explained that religion must be part of politics in the interest of

human welfare. He did not raise his voice, but at any mention of Bhindranwale a grim expression came over his face and when I asked if Sant Jarnail Singh was a member of the Akali Dal, Longowal replied tersely "You must ask him that." He uttered no word of ill-will against the Hindu community and we left with the conviction that this was a good man, certainly no fanatic, a leader in a category apart from the dominant majority of politicians.

Detention In Udaipur

Sixteen months later, after the trauma of the assault on the Golden Temple, I heard about him from a lawyer who had met Sant Longowal in Udaipur, where he had been "detained" since June 8th 1984. The lawyer described the conditions of his detention in the Legislators' Guest House. The building was surrounded by about 200 men of the armed forces camped in tents pitched in the compound. Bunkers had been dug all around the building, and sandbags positioned everywhere, guns ostentatiously at the ready, according to the advocate. The curtains of the guest house had been replaced by heavy tarpaulins to prevent anyone from seeing inside or vice versa. Nor presumably could fresh air or light penetrate. The public road before building had been blocked off, and the front doors of houses situated on the road, sealed. The army was in control outside, the police inside.

Longowal told his lawyers that they were the first persons he had been allowed to meet since his solitary confinement started on June 8th. It was now August. He was permitted no radio and the only newspaper he had seen till that day was on July 3rd, a Punjabi paper dated fifteen days earlier. No member of his family had been allowed to visit him. (After his release in April this year Longowal told the ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY OF INDIA that two members of his family visited him some weeks earlier. He also said that "six or seven armed men" kept encroaching on his privacy all the time.)

While the two lawyers, who were representing him in the appeal against his detention in the Supreme Court, were talking with him, the Jail Superintendent and a plain clothes CID officer insisted on being present throughout. The lawyers protested that according to written rules a conversation between lawyer and client is "privileged", but the two men paid no attention and refused to leave, refused



even to stay out of earshot, stating that their orders were to "listen in". The lawyer-client interview became a written question-answer interchange, in Gurmukhi and Urdu script. But after half an hour, the Government men objected to this and conversation was resumed, in Punjab.

Yet this man, treated like the most dangerous national enemy, incarcerated in solitary confinement for ten months with no charge against him, out off from the rest of the world in every way, in a deliberate effort to break his spirit, — he was allowed to walk in a enclosed courtyard outside his room once a day — showed no sign of bitterness when he was finally released, no sign of anger, of personal resentment. Not even the pain and shock of the news he received about what had happened in the Punjab during his confinement, and the reports of the post-assassination savagery in Delhi and other cities, provoked anti-Hindu sentiments from him. Angry and anguished, he only repeated what he had consistently asserted, that the Akali fight was against the Government and the ruling party, both of whom he held fully responsible.

In the National Interest

In the unique circumstances in which he found himself on his release, politically on the defensive with his own people, thanks to the deliberate campaign to defame his name by describing his arrest as a "surrender" and to the equally deliberate tactic to weaken him politically by removing him from the scene by a long, unjustifiable incarceration, Longowal's initial reactions to Mrs Gandhi's assassination and the death of Bhindranwale led to misgivings in many circles, but later events put all this in a proper perspective.

In the interests of the community's welfare and the unity of the nation he generously overcame his deeprooted mistrust of the Government and the ruling party, and extended the hand of conciliation to meet the Prime Minister's initiative for an accord.

In Tilak Vihar

In late April when he visited Delhi, I was curious to see if the past dramatic, tragic months had changed the Sant. He came to Tilak Vihar to talk to the many hundred widows of the November killings. The meeting place was overflowing with men, women and children, curious to see him, hungry for solace. The ground before the dias was crowded with the seated widows, old and young. Longowal looked different from the man I had met in April 1983. The serenity was still there, but his face reflected a sadness that had not been present earlier, there was sorrow in his eyes and the gentle smile was missing. He spoke very briefly, quietly expressing his grief. He assured his listeners that the "quam", and the Akali Dal were behind them, that they were not alone. "We will become strong" his voice carried conviction "But the ruling party will never be able to remove this stain from its forehead."

One of the widows rose to tell her story. She started calmly, but soon tears streamed down her face through the words. Longowal listened to the harrowing tale, related without dramatics, tears in his eyes. Another widow described how her husband and sons had been brutally done to death in front of her and the other seated women wept silently at their own memories. Compassion is a rare quality in politicians, but one could sense strongly Longowal's deep sense of compassion, could instinctively feel that he shared one's own sense of terrible helplessness in the face of such pain

and suffering. His sharing of grief came through in his few simple words, in the very diffidence of his bearing, in his eyes, throughout that pilgrimage of grief in Sultanpuri and Mongolpuri. He walked through the lanes of burned homes, some with heaps of ashes just over the threshold, visited homes where survivors had returned just to share their grief with him, sat in Gurudwaras which bore the marks of insensate hatred. He made no dramatic gestures, spoke no passionate words. But those who had suffered felt he shared their anguish and their anger, that he was with them.

Capital Exposure

At Sapru House a couple of days later, his first public exposure in the capital, he impressed everyone with that some simplicity, that great gift of conviction and sincerity without oratory, the sense of quiet strength and determination, touched always with the diffidence of humility. Unlike most public leaders he had no convenient images to suit different situations. He was always himself.

That was only the starting point of the emergence of Sant Longowal as the one Sikh leader who could restore to the community its sense of pride and honour, through the assertion of his own courage, his commitment to Hindu — Sikh amity and to the nation's integrity along with his commitment to non-violence. In a few short weeks he transformed the picture of the future, built up credibility, emerged as a national figure with a national role to play, and in spite of those who opposed his call for communal amity, and condemnation of violence, there was hope that, given time, he would overcome.

Had the elections been postponed as he advised, he would have consolidated his strength, mobilized the vast majority of Sikhs in Punjab and in the rest of the country who welcomed this seachange in Sikh politics. It would not have been a easy struggle but there was every chance for success. He could have interjected a desperately needed credibility into the Indian body politic. Tragically political expediency again dictated otherwise, elections were announced, "Longowal, Man of Peace, is Killed" read the headlines in THE STATESMAN, and India's future once again tethered the razor's edge.



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Hanuman Singh the Kannadiga Sikh



S. Hanuman Singh Yerrur, the Kannadiga Sikh with members of his family.

We had heard of and even seen a few white Americans and Canadians who had become Sikhs, but had neither met nor heard of a Kannadiga (a Kannada speaking person) Sikh. So my husband and I could not resist the opportunity of meeting such a person when we heard about him during our recent visit to Bangalore. The person in question turned out to be well built, middle aged, bearded and turbaned. A perfect example of a *Keshdhari* (long-haired) Sikh. In spite of his rather dark skin you could not make out that he was not from the Punjab. His 'Sat Sri Akal' was amazingly Punjabi. Only later on when he spoke English or a broken Hindi did one wonder where he was from. He could have been some one whose family had migrated to the Kannada speaking part of India some time ago. In fact there are several hundred such Sikh families in Karnataka whose ancestors had been recruited by Tipu Sultan for his army. But Hanuman Singh Yerrur (what an interesting name!) has no connections with Punjab and is a first generation Sikh. Born of Kannadiga Hindu parents in a border village in Gundulpet Taluk, Mysore district on the Karnataka-Tamilnadu border, his birth had been preceded by that of four daughters. Like

most Indians his parents also wanted a son. Being denied a male heir they visited several temples, churches, mosques and finally went to NANAKZIRA in Bidar, a gurudwara built on the spot where Guru Nanak had once stayed. As providence would have it, a visit to this gurudwara made their dream come true. A son was born. He was named Hanuman, but made a Sikh. His Hindu Kannadiga parents started praying to Guru Nanak in addition to other Hindu deities and the young Hanuman grew up as a Sikh boy, with long hair and a kada (metal bangle). It was only when he was at college in Mysore that he learnt to tie a turban with help of a few fellow Sikh students.

We were quite amazed to see not only Sardar Hanuman Singh but also his three sons so totally 'at home' in their turbans and patas (large handkerchiefs used as mini-turbans). Hanuman Singh married a girl from a high placed Hindu family after making it clear to her parents that as his wife their daughter would be expected to embrace Sikhism. Like a good Indian wife this Hindu Kannadiga woman also became a Sikh and all their seven children have been brought up as Sikhs.

Both Sardar and Sardarni Hanuman Singh learnt Gurmukhi and can read the Guru

ing me as a terrorist. When children see me, they say "there goes Beant Singh". What do I have to do with Punjab, tell me?" "Because I know the high tolerance levels of the Kannadigas I don't feel threatened but in any other place I would probably feel unsafe just because of my Sikh looks."

Hanuman Singh blames the media for creating a terrorist image for every Sikh. To illustrate how artificial the Hindu-Sikh divide is, Hanuman emphasises the closeness between the two religions. "Om" is the 'Moolmantra' of both. I say, Sikhism is Hinduism minus superstition. In order to escape degradation and insult inflicted by their own religion many Hindus became Sikhs. This first generation and very articulate Sikh believes that Sikhism became a great religion because it was carried forward and developed for 240 years by ten living Gurus — and they all guided it in the same direction." Proud as he is of his Sikh heritage, he still finds his co-religionists to be rather conservative, orthodox

few Sikhs have cared to learn this language; even all Punjabis have not learnt it." So like the language, the religion has also not been able to break out of its geographical limitations. He believes that if Sikhs had not been conservative in the matter of their religious language, there would have been many more Sikhs in India and the world.

We felt Hanuman Singh was making some very important points which the Sikh religious leaders should pay attention to. He also pointed out that Guru Gobind Singh recruited Khalsas from different parts of the country. With pride in his eyes he added "one of the *Panj Pyaras* — Sahib Singh — was from my part of India, Karnataka." "But now none of this happens. The Sikh religion has become a religion you are born into and not a faith you embrace", he added with sadness.

Sikhs — a leaderless People

Hanuman Singh feels Sikhs have not produced good political leaders. With a twinkle he adds "Perhaps because every Sikh was called a Sardar, every one thinks he is a leader."

He laments the fact that outside Punjab virtually no Sikh is in any State Assembly. "Their political participation is so little. They should get more involved in the affairs of the region where they happen to be settled."

Later on we heard about the activities of the Bangalore Singh Sabha and realized that Hanuman Singh does not just pontificate but puts his views in to action. During the recent drought in Karnataka, the Singh Sabha donated Rs 100,000 to the Chief Minister for drought relief. The Singh Sabha also organized a function on Karnataka Day to express its solidarity with the state. Hanuman Singh strongly believes that it is such gestures of solidarity from people of different States and religions towards each other which will make India strong.

How one wishes our so-called leaders who are constantly fighting battles over state boundaries, water, languages, villages and capitals, could be imbued with the sanity which Hanuman Singh and millions of other Indians still have. How one hopes the goodwill of the silent majority would prevail over the short-sighted, self-seeking and small people who have seized the reins of the country in their incapable hands.

Sardar Hanuman Singh is well and truly a "Wahe Guruji Ka Khalsa" and "Wahe Guruji Ka Kannadiga".

Kamla Bhasin



Hanuman Singh Yerrur at work.

Granth Sahib. In fact Hanuman Singh knows more about Sikhism than many Sikhs do. To explain this he said 'oh, it is the same thing — when we Indians learn English, we learn it better than the English!'

Hanuman Singh, an M.A. LL.B., was in the Territorial Army and saw action both in the Pakistan and Bangladesh wars and is now a divisional safety officer in the Indian Railways. He is very active in the social affairs of the Sikh community and also seems to be very popular among the Sikhs in the city, most of whom are from the Punjab. He was recently elected as the president of the Bangalore Singh Sabha. Reflecting on his own experience, Hanuman Singh emphasises that religion does not necessarily have much to do with language, culture or region. If there can be Punjabi, Bengali, African and Arabic Muslims, why can't there be Kannadiga and Tamil Sikhs? This southern Dravidian Sikh feels that Sikhs and people from other religions should integrate with the culture, language and ethos of the regions where they happen to live. He himself is a living example of this but points out with a deep sense of pain that "even I am drawn into the turmoil of Punjab's politics. People look at me and start bait-

and in ward looking. They have given up reaching out to other communities. And to make his point, Sardar Hanuman Singh gave several examples. "Langar or community eating was meant to bring men and women from different castes and communities together. But now it is usually only Sikhs who participate in the langar."

"People in general do not know much about Sikhism and Sikhs have done very little to explain it to others". Such inaction however does not apply to this Kannadiga Sardar, who has written several booklets in Kannada to explain the Sikh ethos and creed.

Hanuman Singh made another very interesting point to explain why Sikhism has remained confined to Punjab. He asserted that "Sikhs are the only people who have created a religious language — Gurmukhi. Very

Bangalore Singh Sabha members presenting a cheque for Rs. 1 lakh to Chief Minister, Hegde for drought relief.



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Federalism and National Integration

A.S. Narang

Dr A S Narang, who teaches political science at Delhi University argues that regional and cultural aspirations in a pluralistic society are a natural phenomenon, posing no threat to national unity.

The signing of an Accord by the Government of India with the Mizo National Front after the Punjab and Assam Accords, has again made certain people raise their eyebrows at what they see as the Union government's submission to so-called regional, separatist or sectarian movements. These elements, including some political parties, see such movements as more than a demand for additional powers or autonomy for states in India's federal system. They are considered to be a sudden phenomenon, born from the nefarious designs of certain groups and pose a threat to the integrity and stability of the country. Therefore, no compromise or settlement should be made with them. They should simply be crushed by the exercise of State power.

These people forget that politics at any level is not an autonomous or isolated phenomenon but part of the overall social process. To them national integration is to be achieved only by building a coherent political society from a multiplicity of traditional societies, to increase cultural homogeneity and value consensus, and to elicit from the individual, deference and devotion to the claims of the State. These prophets of despair see demands for autonomy, and "compromises" or accords with regional or ethnic and cultural groups as a source of conflict, because they tend to think of cultural assimilation as a process that is either generally desirable, or in any case inevitable, and certainly one that should not be interfered with.

The Red Threats to Integration

But in actual fact the exact opposite is true. Those who see diversity as a source of conflict overlook that conflict itself arises because of threats to the factors which contribute to diversity — threats to the separate identity, characteristics or even existence of the group. Such threats can be active (such as physical or cultural genocide or discriminatory legislation) or passive (such as non-recognition of the group or failure by the majority to understand the effects on the minority of economic, social or technological change or pressure). Balkanization of a country, as Prof Iqbal Narain puts it, is not essentially a function of cultural pluralism but of failure at the managerial level, both economic and political.

If it is true that the culture of a minority is the outward expression of a community of individuals conscious of having an identity different from that of the majority group in society, it is equally true that the will to retain such a separate identity



implies that the aspirations of the two, the majority and minority, will also be different. They may share or have been forced to share the same political framework. But this does not mean that they share a common identity. On the contrary, it is precisely because members of the minority feel that they have a different destiny that they have a compulsive will to retain their separate identity. To quote Alock, the destiny of a minority is not linked solely to its ability to maintain itself as a group politically, economically and socially vis-a-vis the rest of the world in general, but more particularly, vis-a-vis the host state.

The Need for Cultural Power

The two factors are complementary, and cultural minorities are only too aware that failure to maintain themselves politically, economically and socially leads to the erosion of their cultural identity. This means that a cultural minority must be able to develop itself so as to keep pace with the host state majority at the economic and social level. This in turn means that when one talks of protection of minorities it is not merely a question of introducing measures to preserve minorities, like flies in amber, but of ensuring that their ability to develop themselves will be an inherent part of the protective process. But in order to achieve this, cultural power is essential, the source of which depends on political and economic power. Thus, there is need, in plural societies, for decentralization of power through the federal process.

Historic Commitment to Federalism Betrayed

It is in this context that India adopted the concept of federation to actualise and uphold the values of national unity, cultural diversity, democracy, regional autonomy and rapid socio-economic transformation through collective efforts. However, except for a few years in the beginning of Indian federation, these values have not been adhered to. Prof. S.L. Verma in one of his articles points out that circumstances betrayed fe-

deralism in India from the very start. It remained a victim of misunderstanding, confusion, ignorance and vested interests. After independence, the time was not propitious to give it a free hand in the Constitution of India.

During the British period, under the Government of India Act 1935, federalism was presented as a reactionary and conservative force by the Indian National Congress, partly because the British Government brought the princely states in the federal scheme to counteract the nationalist forces. Later, the Muslim League demanded full autonomy for the provinces which was only a little short of granting the right to self-determination. Finally the Direct Action of the Muslim League ensured the rejection of a federation under the proposed Cabinet Mission Plan, and the Congress had to accept the partition.

After partition the Indian National Congress with its overwhelming majority in the Constituent Assembly, dominated every aspect of the making of the Indian Constitution. A large number of the members of the Constituent Assembly did not appreciate the meaning and implications of the proposed federation. Communal riots, the migration of millions of refugees, widespread lawlessness, food shortages, problems pertaining to Jammu and Kashmir, Hyderabad and Junagadh, insurgency in Andhra Pradesh, etc., followed in quick succession, compelling the members to emphasize the unitary provisions of the proposed Constitution in the Assembly.

Centralization of Powers

The cumulative effect was to subordinate provincial consciousness to all-out support for national unity in the spirit of the "nation in danger". With the Unionists dominating the provincialist because of their national stature and eminence, the Centre was entrusted with wide powers. When Congress came to power it was less enthusiastic about the reorganisation of the country on linguistic basis than it had been when it had sought mass support for the overthrow of the British. The ruling circles

felt that language was not only a binding force, but could also be a separating one.

Rethinking on Linguistic States

Therefore the earlier Congress linguistic states policy could be implemented only after each separate case had been examined carefully, and without creating any serious administrative dislocation and conflict which could jeopardise the political and economic stability of the country. This rethinking was, however, against the strong tradition of decentralization and the great role that local politicians and other eminent men had played in giving the nationalist movement its national character.

The change of thought in the ruling circles, could not stop the demand for linguistic reorganisation of the states. Nor did postponing the issue strengthen the feelings of national unity and solidarity. The reverse was the case. Ultimately linguistic reorganisation of states had to be carried out but this neither disrupted the work of national reconstruction nor produced any disequilibrium in the planned development of the economy. If anything its result has been functional, in as much as it removed a major source of discord, and created homogeneous political units which could be administered through a medium understood by the vast majority of the population. However, the hesitant and defective manner in which the work of reorganisation was carried out, left many subsidiary problems.

Congress Party's Policy of Centralization

Even the centralized federation provided by the Constitution was considered too decentralized by the ruling party which started augmenting its powers at the centre without scruples. The two pronged effort was first to keep the dominant party in power in as many states as possible and, secondly to consolidate the central leadership's authority within the party. For this purpose various constitutional and extra constitutional methods, including use of the Governor's office and Presiden-

tial powers, and manipulation of the party structure were used.

Minorities become fearful

The efforts to concentrate powers at the Centre, the absence of a sound language policy and the very ambivalent attitude of the State towards secularism, accentuated the fear among linguistic and cultural groups, and religious minorities that attempts were being made to assimilate them in the larger Hindu culture. It is against this background that one has to understand the emergence and growth of movements for autonomy, self-determination, statehood or more powers for the states.

It must be kept in mind that, simultaneously with these natural pulls and pressures for autonomy and identity, the processes of economic integration have also been at work in the wake of nationally planned economic development. As a result of these processes, even relatively 'havenot' regions have come to realize that their ultimate salvation lies in remaining a part of the Union and not in seceding from it. Thus, while regions within a state try to forge a separate identity as a state, or the states demand more powers and relative autonomy, they do not want to leave the Union.

Resilience of the System Essential

Conflicts in culturally plural societies may appear to be acute, particularly in situations beset with economic scarcity and exposed to exploitation by a political elite looking for support in a democratic polity. But in fact, these conflicts may basically only be manifestation of bargaining pressure politics, working toward a reasonable politico-economic deal, rather than secession from the national mainstream. If the politico-economic system shows enough resilience to be firm and yet be able to accommodate reasonable demands, it may succeed not merely in containing the conflicts that aim at unreasonable and extravagant bargaining, but also convert them into healthy partnership deals in the interest of nation-building. It is for this reason that accords such as the Punjab and Mizoram agreements are important and need to be implemented sincerely.

If the political system in which social cleavages exist is based on a pluralist decision system rather than on an authoritarian system, the probability of political integration will be higher. The political demands of regional groups are not necessarily the antitheses of the territorial integrity of the country. They do not reflect a fissiparous but a normal centrifugal tendency in a federation, and should not be taken as a call for disintegration of the national sovereignty but for its re-integration. Therefore what is required is accommodation for regional aspirations. The recent accords are a reasonable step toward this direction and should be evaluated accordingly. ●

TO LET: A WOMB

Gurmukh Singh Jeet



*Khushwant Singh says of
the author*

Gurmukh Singh Jeet has to his credit over a dozen novels, compilation of short stories and translations of works of Dickens, Zola and George Eliot. He is, nevertheless, a disappointed man because there are

more book burners than book readers in the society he moves in.

Part of Jeet's sourness with the world comes from his missionary zeal to educate his readers who would rather hear a simple yarn than have lessons ... lumped in the tale. In this short story the story teller gets the better of the self-appointed tutor.

Hardly had I taken my seat in the hall of the Venkateswara University, when someone putting his hand on my shoulder said in Punjabi, "I am Khanna. It is good that you have come, Sardarji. I already knew of your arrival." To have been addressed in chaste Punjabi in Tirupati where the spoken language is only English or Telugu, took me by complete surprise and I at once looked up at his face.

In the hall, the All India Telugu Writers Conference was being held, to which I had been invited to read a paper.

Khanna continued, "please stay with us. My wife and I would be delighted. We are fed up with this taxing English-Hindi business; with you, we'll be able to have a heart to heart chat. It will be nice, to hear the sound of Punjabi in our home."

Walking towards the verandha outside the hall, I said, "Thank you, Khanna ji; but I'll stay in the Padmavati College Hostel with the Telugu writers. After all,

that is why I have come all the way. But I will certainly visit you."

"O.K. But you must dine with us tomorrow. I will pick you up," said Khanna and I gladly accepted this invitation. From it was born this story, narrated to me by Mrs. Khanna. You are the judge of its veracity. I have nothing to say.

When the call bell rang, Savitri Amma was giving a bath to her youngest son, Aluri. She mixed the soap and water, singing a few lines from her new poem. Her face, lit with a smile, the rhythm of her new poem quivered on her lips. Asking her servant Bhimayaya to take care of Aluri, she walked, humming, to the drawing room.

"Hello, Satyanarayana Anna!" she greeted the visitor with folded hands.

"Hello!" said Satyanarayana Murthy getting up briefly from the sofa. "After my lecture in the university, I was going towards Balaji Colony. Enroute, I thought of paying you a visit too.

Savitri Amma was still humming the words of her new poem — nachelee, nachelee ate ne paryan.

"Are you composing a new poem?" Satyanarayana remarked. "Yesterday I read your latest collection of poems, 'Saudamni'. It stands out because of its awareness and its original outlook. Could you please recite the latest poem for me?"

"I have not penned it yet. I was composing it in my mind as I was giving a bath to Aluri," said Savitri Amma, covering up her shoulder with the corner of her saree. She blushed delicately, her milk white face like an unripe coconut treated with a tinge of sindoor. "But I'll recite the new poem."

Each line of the poem made Satyanarayana's eyes shine brighter. His fingers played softly but feverishly on the flower pot lying on the centre table. By the time Savitri Amma finished her recital, Bhimayaya had brought coffee. She said, "Murthy Garu, have coffee please."

Satyanarayana in appreciation of the poem, said "I am really surprised, that, inspite of your heavy household chores, you can create so many beautiful poems! Don't you think that looking after the children is a full time job?"

"May be," she replied. "But I can say with certainty that by the time Aluri is walking, I'll have gathered enough material for the fourth and fifth volumes of my poems". She sipped her coffee. "You know, my first anthology was out when my son, Somanchi, was two years old; the second one, when my daughter, Salochna, was three; and the third one when Nageswar was only one. My preoccupation with my children seems to stir the poet in me. I feel as if my whole being is involved in my creations." "If that is so, the number of children you conceive should keep pace with your volumes of poetry, and Telugu poetry will barely gain!" Satyanarayana remarked with a gentle mischievousness.

"Yes, it is so!" replied Savitri emphatically, blunting the edge of his taunt. Then shrugging her shoulders, she said, "I think a woman realises herself in procreation. Literary creation and procreation go together."

Satyanarayana could find no answer to this so he said, "Your husband, Narsimha Rao has always maintained that bringing up children requires far too much effort. I wonder what he thinks of your views?"

Our differences are not marked yet, but they are increasing. My husband thinks that we cannot have any more children! His stance threatens to strangle my poetic inspiration! she said in a faltering voice, looking melancholy, however, she maintained her composure and continued discussing Telugu poetry for quite some time.

Many years later Savitri sat alone, a picture of desolation. Somachi had left for his college. Raja Salochna was studying in the 10th class, Nageshwar in the 7th and Aluri in the 5th. All of them had left for school. She did not know what to do with herself. The house was spick and span and furnished with a quiet elegance. Bhimayya attended to all the household chores; and there was nothing for her to do. She made no effort to read or to occupy herself in any way. She was thoroughly bored with herself and her life.

While loitering on her lawn, she spotted Satyanarayana Murthy. She thought perhaps his company would lessen the tedium of her life. She asked him to come in and congratulated him. He had received his Doctorate a few months ago, and had been appointed Head of the Telugu Department. He had already established his reputation as a literary critic over the past few years.

Paying hardly any attention to her congratulations, he said, "Saudari Savitri Amma! I have come to sort out matters with you." He addressed her as a sister and talked so seriously, that what he said could neither be taken lightly, nor as a taunt. His eyes went back and forth, and his restless hands alerted her for any eventuality. He continued, "First, answer my question: When will your next collection of poems be out?"

There is no question of that! I have not written a single line for a number of years!" She replied, with an affected smile underlaid with sadness.

Seeing through her pretentious behaviour, he once again said, in a serious voice, "Saudari Savitri Amma! and chief Telugu poet. I have created an atmosphere of expectancy about your work; and you! — you say that you have not written a single new poem for years! What went wrong Saudari?"

She was shocked to the core, and discarding all affectation, she said, in a very bitter, sad tone, "Murthy Garu, you know, a few years ago we talked about the source of my poetic inspiration, and you remarked in a lighter vein, that the birth of a child meant the birth of new collection of poems! How I wish you had understood me! Narsimha ought to have respected my feelings! He ought to have realised that no one woman is like another: no two are the same."

(Continued on page 13 col 1)

Continued from page 12

Had he understood either my womanhood or its importance, he would not have undergone a vasectomy operation, when Aluri was just two years old. His action has stifled my poetic inspiration. It seems as if the poet in Savitri Amma is long dead."

Putting his finger on his lips, Satyanarayana forbade her to say anything further. "God is omnipotent," he said. "Tirumalai Hill is the abode of Lord Venkateswara, the God incarnate. He can rejuvenate your poetic gifts." With these words, he left her house.

The mental agony and despair which had shaken her during the last eight years can best be imagined, rather than described. It was as if the reason for her existence had vanished. Her life stretched away, empty and sterile.

It was during this taxing period, that it dawned on her that her only salvation lay in procreation. She suddenly experienced a strange burning sensation inside her womb. She imagined that its walls were shrinking and drying up. The aridity of her barren state engulfed her. For her, it was death-in-life; and she knew only God could help her.

Her faith in God kept growing. Throughout those empty years, she had looked up to him as her saviour. She had walked many times to the abode of her God, as she preferred to go barefoot to the temple, rather than hire a taxi. She did not even pay the seven rupees for restricted entry into the sanctum sanctorum, but stood in queues with the common pilgrims for hours altogether for 'sarvadarshna', and prayed with folded hands.

Her piety knew no bounds. She prayed to God at Navratri and on other auspicious occasions. She donated money to the temple, and bathed in the holy tank. She also visited other well-known temples to revive her creative faculties.

While under going her penance, she never thought her husband was unsympathetic. She was only too aware of his affection and pity for her plight. Over and over again he regretted his hasty action in having the vasectomy. She would often console him saying, "It is not your fault. It is the guilt of my karma. I have faith in God's munificence; He can work wonders!"

Navratri dawned the next day. Since early morning, she had been experiencing the peculiar burning sensation within her, as if it would incinerate her womanhood. The children had left for their schools and colleges. Narsimha had also gone to the University earlier than usual, to attend a special function. The entire house had forlorn look. She detested rooms without children and gardens without blooming flower beds. She wished some child would wreak havoc with the drawing room, and scatter her decorations, so that she could busy herself rearranging them tears in her eyes. She said her prayer as enshrined in the 'Sri Venkatesawara Mangal Sutra'.

She vowed to offer her long silken hair to the Lord. Her hair was her treasure; when she

rolled her fingers through it, it inspired her; it intoxicated Narsi; it endlessly delighted her daughter, Salochna.

Dusk was falling. Her agitation was getting out of control. Suddenly a thought flitted through her mind; in order to experience womanhood again, she should let out her womb. Otherwise, like wet wood, her frustration would smoulder on.

She thought of the joy of a stirring womb — and of the barrenness without. A bitter smile creased the corner of her lips.

The neon lights on either side of the hilly road to the Devasthanan lit up the entire route. There were seven gates of light. God's sanctum was across the seventh gate. It seemed as if the blue lights beckoned the way to Heaven, and once she crossed these gates, she would attain peace. With fire raging in her heart, she walked on foot and reached there quite late; about half-past twelve. The fair was on a colossal scale, with pilgrims clustered in every nook and corner. There was no room available, as everyone was getting ready for their holy dip in the morning, on the auspicious occasion of Navratri.

There was a hall some distance away from the Devasthanan, where many pilgrims were resting. She too, made her way there. The pilgrims, men and women, were relaxing on the floor. Sleep was out of the question as there were only three or four hours left for the holy dip. Totally exhausted, she tossed restlessly, oblivious of the presence of the other pilgrims resting by her side. Accidentally she bumped into the 'pilgrim' lying close by her. To her surprise, he was awake. By chance, her hand brushed his chest. He turned, and his right leg entwined with hers. Suddenly, a wave of long forgotten exhilaration, swept through her body. Her nerves were on fire. The momentary touch had aroused him deeply. Irresistably, she was drawn to him, and took him in her embrace. Her inflamed inner self began to experience an exquisite relief. Afterwards, she did not know when she fell asleep.

The hurly burly of the pilgrims, in the hall woke her up at 4 O'clock in the morning. At first, she felt as if she were in a new and unknown world, after a gap of many years, a line of a poem stirred within her — O God of Love! I can never desert you. You are my rhythm, my song, my life. She was taken aback. It seemed as if she had regained her deeply buried poetic world.

She got up humming the words of the new poem. An inner serenity pervaded her being. She shed her clothes and had a dip in the Papanasham tank. Then she had her precious hair shaved, and offered it to the God, as if it were indeed a treasure.

She took off her pearl necklace and deposited it in the God's Hundi.

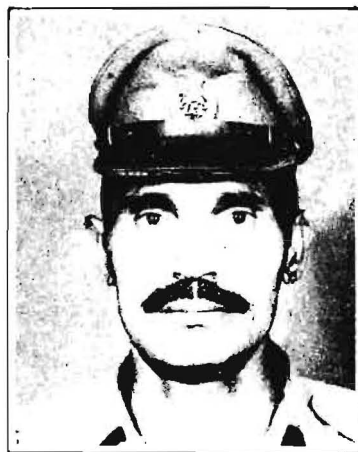
Coming out of the Devasthanan, she glanced down the hill, the river Swarnamukhi lay supine, glistening in the heat-rays of the Sun. Crowds were milling all around, yet at last, she was at peace with herself, and her surroundings. Far away, the rice fields of Kalahasti were a beacon glorious, golden colour.

Jugti Ram and the Price of Being Secular

Avtar Singh Judge

At the time of the carnage of November 1984 when murderous mobs descended on Delhi, killing and roasting alive thousands of Sikhs, Jugti Ram, an assistant sub-inspector in the Delhi Police, saved nearly sixty innocents' lives. While doing so he not only responded to the call of duty but also did so at a great risk to his own life.

It was the terrible night of 2nd November. The whole city of Delhi was in the grip of communal violence. Large scale killings of Sikhs had already taken place. One of the worst affected areas in Delhi, Block No. 32 of Trilok Puri, had virtually turned into a Shamsan (burning hell). That was the time when Jugti Ram, along with two police constables was keeping a watch over Block No. 20. This area had a large Sikh population. Partly because of the alertness shown by Jugti Ram and his men and partly because of the good sense that prevailed amongst the people this remained completely undisturbed. Probably that was why some lucky Sikhs who had escaped from the clutches of rioters elsewhere



P.C. Jugti Ram
a victim of 'Secularism'

started taking refuge in this area either alone or in small groups.

It was already past eight when Sadhu Singh and Raja Singh, who looked completely shattered, approached Jugti Ram and virtually begged him to save their families from imminent dishonour and death. They had just come back after hiding about 60 persons, which included old women, teenagers pregnant women and mothers with unwearied babies, in the house of a Gujar friend in Chilla village. Since most of the people in the village were hostile to the Sikhs there was the possibility that they would soon be discovered, dishonoured and despatched to the other world. Jugti Ram, who always had great regard for the Sikhs followers of the saintly Guru Nanak, promised them that he would do everything in his power to help them.

By then the situation had gone from bad to worse. No Sikh was safe in any part of Delhi. Jugti Ram was still racking his brain to find a solution to the problem of the two Sikhs, Sadhu and Raja Singh, when he received an order from his superiors to evacuate all the Sikhs in his area and send them to the newly set up camp in the vicinity of the Kalyanpuri police station. He



One of the families saved by Jugti Ram; now 'settled' in Tilak Vihar.

went into action immediately, divided his people into small groups and transported them safely to the camp.

While doing all this Jugti Ram did not forget the agony he had noticed on the faces of the two Sikhs. In his heart he had already made up his mind to save those trapped people in Chilla village. On an impulse he presented the two sardars to his senior officers, who happened to be present at the Kalyanpuri Police station, with the hope that they would find some way to help them. But when he was that the heart ending entreaties of the sardars had absolutely no effect on the officers, he came forward and sought the permission of his officers to allow him to use the CRP van and leave the rest to him.

Both the officers looked at him with obvious distaste and one of them even taunted him with the words, "Go if you must, but it would be far better if you kept your heroic impulses in check."

The simple hearted Jugti Ram failed to note the displeasure writ large on the faces of his superiors and in his eagerness to help his stricken Sikh brethren, assumed that permission had been granted to him to do as he pleased. He immediately jumped into the van along with the two Sikhs and set out for Chilla village. In the village, he found that the inhabitants were not only hostile but also in a murderous mood. Unmindful of the danger to his own life, he plunged into the task of resuing the trapped people. He soon traced them with the keep of the two sardars aid after displaying exemplary courage, brought them back safely to the camp.

His face was flushed with satisfaction at the success of his mission when he reported back at the Kalyan Puri Police Station.

It was already past midnight. The ACP in-charge ordered him (Jugti Ram) to accompany him to Mayur Vihar where it was reported riots had broken out. But when they reached there he found that the area was calm and quiet. After some aimless driving around the ACP dropped him off and asked him to go back to his original post of duty. He then walked 3 kms. and reached Block No. 20 of Trilok Puri and kept a careful watch over the area.

In the morning when he went back to report to the police station, he was told that he had been suspended. This was the beginning the Jugti Ram's misfortunes. A week later a case was instituted against him for dereliction of duty.

Jugti Ram was thus forced to wage a bitter struggle to seek Justice for himself. Even his wife knocked at every door from where she expected sympathy and justice. His case was taken up by Jt. Gen. Aurora, Convenor of the Sikh Forum, who wrote to Ved Marwah, the Commissioner of Police, drawing his attention to the injustice done to the man. Moreover all those people whom he had saved were willing to give evidence that at least this particular policeman had done his duty. Even the departmental enquiry conducted by D.P. Sharma, Additional Commissioner of Shahdra exonerated him. But he was still where he was!

Just when everything seemed lost he was reinstated after being in the wilderness for nearly two years. Strange and inscrutable are the ways of our government! Jugti Ram's case is unique. Apart from being a personal tragedy for him and his family, it has far reaching social implications and is a terse comment on the system within which we are living.



You do not have a better choice

Delhi — Gasping for Breath

Chiranjeev Bedi

Nearly six years ago the authorities made a promise to the citizens of Delhi. The promise was that pollution from the Indraprastha (IP) power plant would be checked before the Asiad. But it was not to be. The Asiad came and went. The pollution continued. The next Asiad in Seoul is a few weeks away. That too will come and go; the pollution too will continue. May be it is we who are making a mistake. For perhaps the authorities had in mind the 1990 Asian Games or may be when New Delhi is to host the games again or....

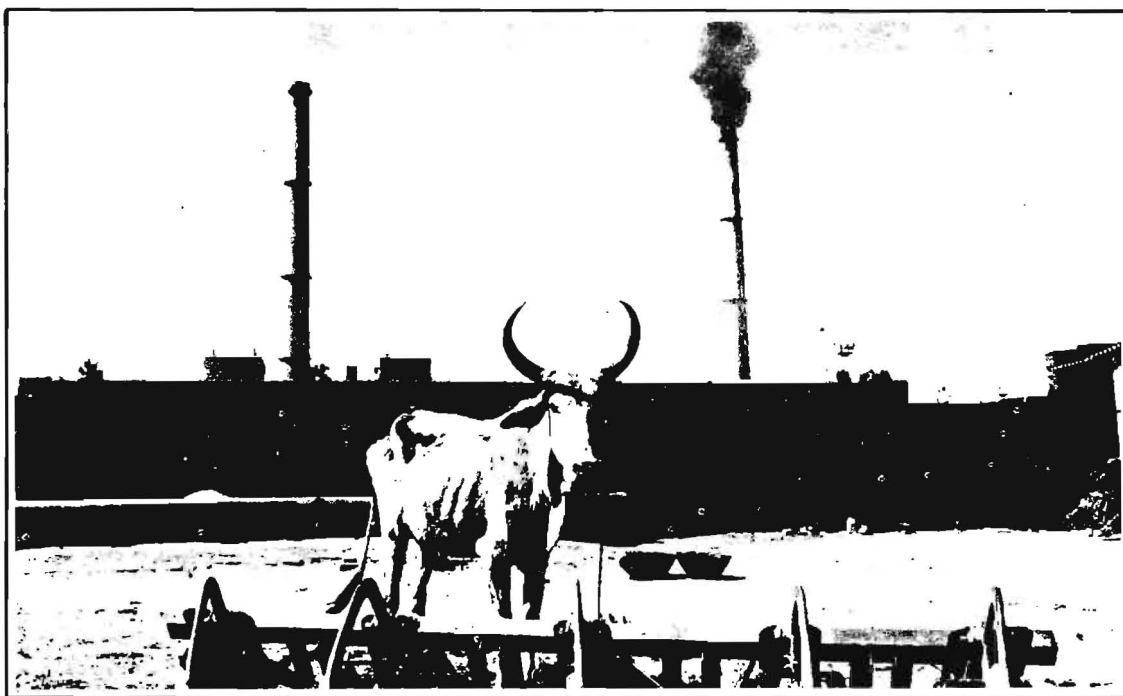
Indeed this has been the general story of air pollution and its control in Delhi. Despite numerous statements made by all and sundry the menace of air pollution has continued to plague the city. Power stations, vehicles, and industries, the major contributors to this pollution, are estimated to discharge about 1,400 tonnes of sulphur dioxide, hydrocarbons, carbon monoxide and oxides of nitrogen everyday, according to Prof. J.M. Dave of the School of Environmental Sciences, JNU. The share of power plants and vehicles in total pollution is around 40 per cent each. Other major sources of pollution are the industries, chullahs and stone crushers.

IP Power Plant Story

To get back to the IP power plant story, the contract to carry out pollution control work had been given as far back as 1980 to an American company. The work was to have been completed before the Asian Games. This attempt however did not succeed, the electrostatic precipitators (pollution-checking devices) failing to control pollution to the desired extent. The authorities on belatedly realising this have now entrusted the work to BHEL. Additional electrostatic precipitators are to be installed and the pollution controlled by 1987. Citizens can only hope and pray that BHEL succeeds where the American company failed.

Badarpur Not Far Behind

The other major power house in Delhi at Badarpur is not far behind in terms of pollution. Seemingly, the competition between the two power plants is not in terms of efficiency, but in terms of which causes more pollution. At Badarpur, apart from the discharge of effluents from the stacks, the inhabitants of areas close to power station receive large quantities of coal dust raised during the various coal handling operations like crushing, dumping, and storage.



Cattle : Several immature deaths due to the coal dust

Photos: Ashish Kothari

Regular monitoring done by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has revealed that levels of suspended particulate matter (SPM) are on an average 1200 ug/m³ (micrograms per cubic metre of air) which is over two times the limit set for industrial area and twelve times the limit prescribed for residential areas. Sulphur dioxide concentrations were on an average 85 ug/m³, which though lower than the limit set for industrial areas is higher than the standard prescribed for residential areas (ug/m³) by the Central Pollution Control Board.

Health Disorders

The health effects on the adjoining village of Molad Band have been disastrous. The high levels of dust have led to disorders like asthma and cough. TB incidence is widespread, the eyes of many a people have been affected due to the air pollution. Cattle, too, are affected and so is farming as pollutants are deposited over the soil, which hinders crop growth.

So serious is this pollution that Dr. T.N. Khoshoo, former Environment Secretary, has remarked, "thermal power plants are raining hell, right here in Delhi. But nothing is being done to contain this".

The 9 lakh motor vehicles of Delhi, which are increasing at the rate of 80,000 vehicles per year also continue to contribute their share without respite. A CPCB study of 1982 had stated, "Indian vehicles of all types have emissions which in pollutional terms are much worse than their counterparts in western countries."

On monitoring the smoke

intensity from diesel vehicles the CPCB found that only 10% of UP State Buses, 15% of Haryana and 25% Inter-State DTC buses conformed to the limit of 65 smoke units on the Hartridge scale. As many as 50% UP buses, 35% of Haryana, 25% of Punjab, HP and Inter-State DTC buses and 20% of Rajasthan buses had smoke intensity of 90 or more, which the Board noted, "should never be permitted to travel unless rectified". The Board recommended that a target to reduce the intensity to 75 or lower by December 1983 and 65 or lower by December 1985 would be practical.

Has this been achieved? No, if a study done by the IIT Delhi, is any indication. It was found only 18% of DTC and 10% of trucks were within the standard 65 on the Hartridge Scale. 49% of DTC buses and 50% of the trucks clocked above 90 (vehicles which should not be allowed to ply, as per CPCB's suggestion). A further cause for alarm was that all tempos monitored had smoke intensity of over 90 on the Hartridge scale.

Air Quality at Traffic Junctions

IIT also monitored air quality at 8 traffic junctions. The findings are not going to bring any cheers. The concentration of SPM was found to be over 5 times the prescribed limit for residential area at Radhu Cinema Chowk. At Nirman Vihar Chowk it was 4.2 times and at Kingsway Camp 3.98 times the standard. At other crossings it ranged between 1.8 times to 3.44 times the standard set.

Carbonmonoxide was found to be 2.48, 2.24 and 2.16 times the limit (2000 ug/m³) at Radhu



Children are worst affected by Badarpur's pollution

Cinema Chowk, Kingsway Camp and Nirman Vihar crossing, respectively. Oxides of nitrogen were more than the limit prescribed at 6 junctions. They were 6, 7, 3.12, 5.81, 2.9, 1.78 and 1.33 times the limit of 80 ug/m³ at Radhu Cinema Chowk, Kingsway Camp, Nirman Vihar, Palika Bhawan, Ashram and ISBT traffic junctions, respectively. And, except for ISBT the concentrations at the five junctions exceeded the limit set even for industrial areas (120 ug/m³).

Menace of Stone Crushers

Meanwhile the stone crushers continue to spread dust and play havoc with the health of hundreds of workers in the southern parts of the city. These are spread over an area extending from Badarpur to Mehrauli. The SPM concentrations have been found to be over 2000 ug/m³, four times the

standards prescribed for industrial areas. Workers are reportedly suffering from high levels of TB and a number of other respiratory diseases.

The health consequences of air pollution in Delhi have not been extensively documented on the basis of epidemiological studies. But it has been reported that respiratory diseases are 12 times the national average in Delhi (The Statesman 19-5-86, and that 30% of Delhi's population suffers from cold and respiratory diseases attributable to air pollution (The Times of India 15-4-85). Tens of thousands of workers suffer various ill-effects from indoors air pollution in power houses and industries, ranging from constant cough and asthma to cancer and permanent impairment of work capacity. A similar number of women of women and children too suffer from the impact of

chullah smoke in low middle and lower class households and in the thousands of 'dhabas' and restaurants strewn around Delhi.

There is no sign of any abatement of this menace — increasingly, indeed, air pollution is becoming one of our greatest sources of disease and economic damage. And unless Delhi's citizens get up in strength and shout at the polluters and at the Government machinery which is supposed to control them, we will continue to choke and gasp for breath.

Written for and on behalf of Kalpavriksh — Environmental Action Group by Chiranjeev Bedi. Kalpavriksh is preparing a detailed report on the state of air pollution in Delhi — for further information please contact Chiranjeev Bedi, A-9, Lakshmi Bai Nagar, New Delhi. Ph: 608968.

NEWSHOUND



By Rap